Staking a Claim: Analysing interventionist discourses of men’s family violence

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SUMMARY

This thesis presents a critical discourse analysis of the frameworks of behaviour change groupwork intervention as a response to the behaviour of men who perpetrate violence and abuse within the family.

Research into this sector has resulted in conflicting intervention strategies and findings. Practitioners are pitted against considerable ambiguities and points of contention, and are aligned and segregated through different vocabularies and articulatory practices. This thesis considers the foundational axioms, nomenclature and rhetorical positioning put forward by advocates of this method of intervention. This includes theoretical understandings of the context of men’s violence and abuse within the family, the claimed ambitions of intervention, the state’s input into regulation of the sector, and the ongoing debate concerning the evaluation and effectiveness of this response to men's behaviour.

This research presents a critical textual analysis of discourse augmented by empirical data gathered from one-to-one semi-structured interviews with key sector players such as program managers and facilitators of men’s behaviour change programs. Critique of publically available agency advertising also supplements this analysis. This thesis is informed by a poststructuralist feminist theoretical framework to analyse the various ways in which agents, in an arena that is “redolent with issues of ownership, jockeying for power and competitive debate”\(^1\), attempt to establish jurisdiction over their expression of authenticity within the sector. This includes a claim to operate within a feminist analysis, a professional claim to scientific knowledge and expertise, and the development of standards for professional practice.

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\(^1\) Jenkins, 1994:19.
STAKING A CLAIM: 
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**Preamble**

The genesis of this research began more than fifteen years ago when, after being exposed to feminism and gender critiques through tertiary studies, I began an association with men’s behaviour change programs and a professional framework for naming and challenging men’s abusive behaviours in the family. I was initially very enthusiastic at the idea of attempting to direct energies to what I perceived then as the cause of the problem, as an adjunct to dealing with the safety issues as consequences of men’s behaviour. In this preamble I would like to consider the primary literature sources that have influenced its gestation.

Hearn’s (1998) *The Violences of Men* provided me with the opportunity to start to seriously consider the extent and constitution of men’s behaviours against their known and intimate partners. Of particular interest was the challenge of engaging men; ways in which a gradually developing eclectic sector of individuals and agencies was attempting to intervene that were respectful of the needs to consider safety and transparency as priorities, and that would hold a feminist analysis of men’s family violence as structurally founded within patriarchy and male privilege as a focus.

Francis and Tsang’s (1997) dossier on men’s ‘treatment groups’ in Ontario aroused suspicion as to how the feminist framework was being co-opted to divert attention away from a structural analysis to a therapeutic intervention that seemed to hold more sway within the community; and with some workers and their agencies. To my mind, the underlying message here was that if the individual man can be ‘fixed’ through therapy or individual counselling, then there is no need to go down the
harder, more challenging road of social change. Coupled to this was limited acknowledgement of the need for social change. Additionally, as workers and programs were claiming to be influenced by and operating under a feminist analysis, the reframing of power, control and domination as individual interpersonal issues addressed through therapy seemed to be incongruent with a feminist structural focus.

“The Class Politics of Domestic Violence” by McKendy (1997) alerted me to a question that was in need of further consideration: that is, why was it that the vast majority of men in behaviour change groups were working class? While there was ample research that demonstrated that women from lower socio-economic backgrounds were considerably more likely to be the victims of partner abuse, there seemed to be no acknowledgment of this variable, perhaps for reasons of being seen to collude with abusive men through minimising, excusing or avoiding responsibility for that behaviour. An earlier paper by McKendy (1992) invited me to consider the need for authenticity in locating men’s subjective experience within their own reference of socio / cultural context. This reinforced for me the structural location of men’s behaviour, while not denying individual responsibility.

Through becoming involved in the broad ‘family violence’ sector, I had begun to recognise and name a more insidious form of domination and coercive control, that of male privilege; a form of abuse that is sanctioned, replicated and reinforced through a structural framework of patriarchy. Ashcraft (2000) was influential in enabling me to recognise the need for a more diverse language that would reconstruct men’s abusive behaviours in the family, and systemic gender inequality generally. I had heard from many female clients that their partners’ behaviour had a theme of hierarchy and implied authority that was played out on the domestic stage.
These women were saying that this behaviour was, for them, not violent or abusive, but it still represented a form of control over them, and a disregard for their own personal sense of agency and equality within the relationship. I connected this to the family violence sectors’ dominant practice of grouping all of men’s pernicious behaviours under the one umbrella of violence, and found that connection problematic.

While being mindful of Francis and Tsang’s (1997) questioning of the co-opting of feminist analyses to work therapeutically with individual men, it was important for me to link this work back to the political discussion of men’s roles and responsibilities in challenging gender-based violence, abuse and domination. Greig’s (2001) articulation of how the dominant discourse of psychological, therapeutic, and behavioural foci had become de-politicised was pointed. There were greater opportunities to be taken in exploring the political interweaving within the context of the violence of social injustices within which most men’s lives are located. Greig (2001) explored the factors that link men, gender and violence, and suggested future potential for working with men to end violence that is founded on gender paradigms. One of those potentialities was moving away from the focus on the individual man’s behaviour to encouraging men to challenge structural foundations of gender oppression.

Laing’s (2002) issues paper, through the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, reviewed the controversies, current interventions and challenges inherent in responding to men who use violent and abusive behaviours in the family. While this was a more general overview of the status quo, of particular interest for me was her acknowledgement of the need to give further consideration to the
intersections of gender and class, a focus on the importance of ‘the system’ in responding to men’s violence and abuse, and a consideration of the vexed question of evaluation of the ‘effectiveness’ of men’s behaviour change programs.

Following on from Laing (2002), but through a much sharper - and broader - lens honed in critical masculinities studies, Pease’s (2004) literature review re-focused my attention on the necessity to critique the axioms - the taken-for-granted truths and foundations - upon which profeminist men’s behaviour change group intervention is reported to be founded. There was also the added challenge of considering how men’s behaviour change programs, that work with individual men, are located within the structure of the state which reinforces, replicates and sanctions the very frameworks that men’s behaviour change programs purport to challenge and confront.

Stark’s provocative and persuasive Coercive Control (2007) provided a major piece of the puzzle in naming more holistically the manifestation of male privilege that, to my mind, had been a largely unidentified form of subjugation and oppression. Stark suggested that to focus on a few acts of domination – unethical and in some cases unlawful as they may be – at the expense of a full assault on patriarchy was to not name men’s behaviour towards women as a human rights violation, a liberty crime: one that attacks the very agency of half the population.

These sources have laid a platform for directing this research, and they have maintained their influence as I have continued my professional engagement with men who use violence and abuse in the family. They have also presented me with a solid foundation to continue to wear, with a sense of humility, the hat of an activist.
who chooses to take the public position that men’s violent and abusive behaviours, in the family (and elsewhere), are morally not acceptable. To my mind, there is an ethical obligation to pursue this challenge.
PART 1

LOCATION & METHODOLOGY
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Setting the Scene

That many women and children need to go to extremes such as hiding and seeking refuge and shelter from their violent partners is a chilling reflection on society’s inability to be able to guarantee their safety. It has been estimated that worldwide approximately 8.7 million women are victimized by a current or former intimate partner each year (Roberts & Roberts, 2005). Men’s violence and abuse, directed at their intimate partners, is neither a new nor a rarely encountered phenomenon; and, only twenty years ago, it was even permitted by law\(^2\). While the law officially no longer offers protection to men who assault their partners, there is evidence to suggest that it may still be socially sanctioned. For instance, a national survey in 1995 revealed that about one in five Australians thought that it was acceptable for a man to use physical force against his wife in some circumstances (OSW, 1995: 33). Eleven years later VicHealth (2006) released the findings of a major study into attitudes, beliefs and changes as part of the Violence Against Women Community Attitudes project in Victoria. This study found that ‘violence-supportive’ attitudes\(^3\) had generally improved on most measures used since 1995. However, there were

\(^{2}\) See High Court case R v L (1991) 174 CLR 379.

\(^{3}\) Violence-supportive attitudes include trivialising violence and its impact, attributing blame to the victim, denying that violence has occurred, denying that public agencies and the wider community have responsibility for violence, justifying or excusing violence (VicHealth, 2006:17).
issues of considerable concern which serve to remind that society has not come nearly as far down the path of egalitarian, respectful, safe relationships as would be hoped for. For example

- Close to one in four respondents disagreed with the statement that “women rarely make up false claims of being raped”. A further 11% were unsure of their answer;

- Almost one in six respondents agreed that in relation to sex “women often say no when they mean yes”. A further 8% were unsure of their answer;

- Disturbingly, close to 40% of respondents agreed that “rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex” (VicHealth, 2006:22).

There is a general recognition amongst sector workers and policy makers that the true representation of men’s violence and abuse towards women in Australia is unknown. For example, *The International Violence Against Women Survey* (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004) identified that fifty-seven per cent of the women surveyed reported experiencing at least one incident of physical violence or sexual violence over their lifetime, and in the past 12 months, 10 per cent of the women surveyed reported experiencing at least one incident of physical and/or sexual violence (2004:2). It is important to consider and acknowledge that analysing the gendered nature of men’s dominating and controlling behaviours in the family requires more than counting

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4 Progress is slow. Three years later Vichealth (2009) repeated the survey and found that while community perceptions of what constituted domestic violence had broadened, there were areas of substantial concern. For example there was a decline in the proportion of people who recognise ‘slapping or pushing a partner to cause harm or fear’ as ‘very serious’ (53 percent in 2009 compared with 64 percent in 1995). There was a significant shift towards a belief that domestic violence is gender-equal with 22% of respondents believing that domestic violence is perpetrated equally by both men and women. Additionally, community understandings of some of the dynamics that characterise this behaviour appear to have worsened with 2009 findings showing that the general population were significantly less likely to understand why women stay in violent relationships (Vichealth, 2009:7-9).

5 An earlier report, the *Australian Women’s Safety Survey* (1996) reported that 23% of women who had been married or living in a defacto relationship had experienced violence by their male partner.

6 See Watson (2001:91), for example, who argued against accepting domestic violence statistics without rigorous scrutiny.
violent acts\textsuperscript{7}. Many factors effect these estimates and reporting of incidents. For example

- The vast majority of violence and abuse experienced by women occurs in the private realm of the family home and is thus less likely to come to the attention of others (Fineman & Mykitiuk, 1993);

- If reporting of men’s violence and abuse in the family reaches the public realm it is less likely to be viewed as seriously as that which is perpetrated outside the home, or between strangers (Cardarelli, 1997);

- Many and varying socio-cultural differences exist in what should be more accurately labelled as violence and abuse.

Despite these limitations, there is no doubt that violence and abuse against women within the family is “…more than an occasional isolated incident” (Hanmer & Saunders, 1993:3), and the level of victimisation varies, in particular, according to the relationship that exists between women and the perpetrator of that behaviour (Johnson, 1996; Coumarelos & Allen, 1998; Mouzos, 2003).

Stark (2007) argued that viewing the abuse of women through the sole lens of incident-specific and injury-based definitions of violence and statistics has managed to hide the major components, dynamics and effects of this behaviour. He proposed that ‘domestic violence’ is “…neither domestic nor primarily about violence”, and that a “…failure to appreciate the multi-dimensionality of (women’s) oppression in personal life has been disastrous for abuse victims” (2007:10). What Stark refers to as “coercive control\textsuperscript{8}” he suggests constitutes a criminal violation of women’s fundamental right to self-determination: that is, “…coercive control is a liberty crime rather than a crime of assault” (2007:13). Seeing partner-perpetrated abuse as a

\textsuperscript{7} For a considered reflection on the engaging with controversial practices and the politics of statistics and counting see Martin & Lynch (2009).

\textsuperscript{8} Stark describes coercive control as a “…condition of unreciprocated authority…identified as domination…(that) victims experience as entrapment” (2007:229). My emphasis.
human rights issue requires a considerable paradigm shift in politics, theory, narrative and morals\textsuperscript{9}.

One question to arise from this is how to work with those who perpetrate this behaviour and, particularly, how this is engaged with and acted out by workers in the sector. Jenkins (1994) homed in on an articulation of the “...awareness of the dominance of issues of hierarchy and competition” from practitioners within the sector. He argued that

(\textit{w})ork with violence and abuse has been especially \textit{redolent with issues of ownership, jockeying for power, and competitive debates as to who has the cornerstone on truth and correct practice}\textsuperscript{10}. Ideologically sound or “more pro-feminist than thou” discussion is common. Protagonists gather in camps which are not unlike political parties, and argue for truth (1994:19).

Practitioners are not immune from the very ideologies that they challenge. Thus, a core component of the research objective in this thesis is that of identifying competing discourses and axioms of intervention, and their roles in articulating subjects’ positions within the politics of the sector. There are many demands in a sector that precariously balances on material and ethical risks and dangers in being seen to step outside the dominant discourses that frame the sector.

Constructing a framework of response to men who perpetrate violence and abuse in the family is a considerably controversial issue, and one with which key players and agencies continue to grapple, as they locate themselves along a continuum of political standpoints. From the earliest days of considering a response to men’s family violence, the formulating of accountable and transparent interventionist programs with men has had a considerable input from women as the imperative for safety has been given due priority. While involvement and advocacy for this

\textsuperscript{9} I will continue to engage further with this point throughout this research.

\textsuperscript{10} My emphasis.
intervention by women’s services has been seen by many involved participants as controversial and contentious, Taylor (2000) suggested that “…the safety of women and children demands of women to be involved. For men’s programs to function in isolation to women’s services and vice versa is fraught with danger” (2000, 41). Oberin (2006) pointed out that “…(f)eminists who support the use of pro-feminist men’s behaviour change programs argue…that it is better for feminists to be delivering and/or controlling the delivery of these programs than non-feminists” (2006:3). In a similar vein, Woodbridge (1998) commented that a coordinated approach11 allows greater transparency across all programs and “…it is important that men’s violence education groups should be linked with, and accountable to, the domestic violence sector and women’s services” (1998:14).

It is worth revisiting – constantly - the focus of interventionist work with men; that is, to keep women and children safe. There have been concerns raised that by placing men at the centre of the engagement, the narratives and experiences of women may again be dismissed or marginalised (Costello, 1997). As Greig (2001) articulated, this demands a considered consciousness “…of the political dimensions of the space within which questions about men and gender based violence get discussed, and (in particular) the ways in which men enter into this space to explore these questions” (2001:4).

**Men’s violence in the family**

In considering questions about men and gender-based violence, it would seem pertinent to consider two initial reflections (Hearn, 1998). First, what is men’s violence in the family and second, how to articulate an understanding of the

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11 This is frequently referred to as an ‘integrated response’.
framework in which this behaviour manifests. Given that this behaviour happens within the context of a relationship, men’s violence in the family is perpetrated on women who are engaged in varying degrees in an intimate relationship with men. Thus, the woman and the man have a relationship before an incident of violence, or violence is one of the first points of contact through initiating social contact or, for example, through the contact involved with purchasing sexual favours from a woman. Given that the man and his partner have a history together, the juxtaposition of violence and, in particular, shared knowing of the violence is both a social relation and a perceptual problem that can presuppose either further and greater violence or a move away from that violence. Thus, the violence itself is a form of knowledge: “…the man knows the woman through his violence, and the woman knows the man as violence”\(^{12}\) (Hearn, 1998:38).

Second, given that violence occurs in the context of relationships, what is of concern here are issues that impact upon the negotiation of intimacy. Various commentators over many years\(^{13}\) have acknowledged that for many women, their most intimate relationships are often the most dangerous. There is then a considerable tension between the expected / wished for closeness of intimacy and the inherent dangers of the man’s violence. Third, and in sympathy with the direction that this research has taken, it would appear that the foci of these behaviours are the inherently gendered means by which men refer to themselves and to their violences. This involves, as Messerschmidt (2000) argued, both being a man and showing that one is a man; as the “…violence serves as a suitable resource for constructing masculinity” (2000:12). Fourth, these violences are behaviours that take place predominantly in the context of heterosexual relationships. The hierarchy that is both implicit and

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\(^{12}\) Hearn’s emphasis.

\(^{13}\) See, for example, Gittins (1985), Dobash & Dobash (1992), Ashcraft (2000) or Taft, Hegarty, & Flood (2001).
frequently explicit in heterosexual relationships is reproduced in men’s relationships to their partners. Sexual relations are enforced, maintained and reproduced with and through violence that Russell (1993) suggested contributes to the eroticisation of dominance.

Fifth, men’s violence within the family occurs within the relatively isolated framework of the ‘private’. Various influences and contributing factors ensure that the privacy of the home can be maintained and the violences are enforced within particular locations. As Hearn (1998) argued, within this context individual men are able to be “…both relatively separate from each other and (yet still be an authentic) part of a specific gender class or sub-class” (1998:39).

**Critically studying men, masculinities and violence against women**

In order to more fully understand the process of engagement and change for men that might underpin the frameworks of men’s programs to support them to move away from their violence, it would be useful to give consideration to the ways in which various masculine subjectivities are socially constructed. In talking about men’s family violence, this violence is located in relation to both the social category of ‘men’ and the varying social divisions that exist between men. It is useful to consider in this analysis the socially constructed category of ‘men as a class’. As a taken-for-granted cohort of the social and cultural world, this designation is somewhat problematic. When theorising about and engaging with the violence of ‘men’, it is important to acknowledge the differences between men as well as

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14 This raised, for Hearn (1998), a more general line of inquiry as to “…what extent heterosexual relations are necessarily harassing” (1998:37).

15 I do not refer to masculinity in this research as ‘an object’ or a fixed entity. I am more interested in the processes and relationships through which men (and women) live out their gendered lives. Thus, masculinity within this thesis is concerned with the actions by which men (and women) “…engage that place of gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell, 1996:71).
overlapping similarities. While there is a common ground in being male, for many men this is where the similarity ends. Men are different in age, marital status, income, race, sexual preference, and more. Men are diverse in their relationships to violence; in their orientations to violence, and in their explanations of violence.

As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 2, models of understanding masculinity that underpin many behaviour change interventions for men appear to perhaps lack an holistic and conceptual framework for accounting for and thus addressing men’s violence. Many men, for many reasons, do not regard their behaviours as violent and abusive. Manifestations of behaviour that others may term violent or abusive are regarded by many men as simply part of the package of being a man / male / masculine, and many behaviours are, accordingly, not questioned. Interventions, policies, politics and engagements with men’s violence’s are about “…contesting and contested definitions of violence” (Hearn, 1998:14). However, they are also about contesting the context of an analysis of men. Accordingly, it would appear to be necessary to understand not only the nature of the violence, but also the socio / political construction of men and masculinities. Through research interviews with men who had used violence Bagshaw, Chung, Couch, Lilburn, & Wadham (1999) found that there was a perception from the men of their violence as not only normal, but justified in the circumstances, as their beliefs about masculinity had an impact on how they were able to communicate within their relationships. Thus, a greater understanding of the masculinities involved in ‘doing’ violence would seem to be essential for a more thorough on-going engagement with men.

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16 One of the foundations of pro-feminism is an acknowledgement of the diversities amongst men.
Critiquing the gendered subjectivities and practices of men clearly complements feminist reflections on masculinity and violence. Collier (1995) proposed that the impact of dominant constructions of masculinity is a key factor in maintaining parameters of oppression and male domination. Therefore, it is vital that there is a “…challenge (to the) dominant ideas of masculinity…in seeking to understand and combat the prevalence of male violence in the family” (1995:250). Snider (1998:24), in sympathy with some of the findings of Bagshaw et al. (1999) mentioned above, suggested that it is useful to “…understand the ways in which domination and violence are (ingrained) inside the individual and in the patterns of everyday life”. This is problematic, however, as it reduces influence to a minimally discernable variable. In applying this focus to something such as privilege for example, Bailey (1998) argued that the bulk of advantage and privilege is not recognised for what it is; indeed “…one of the functions of privilege is to structure the world so that mechanisms of privilege are invisible – in the sense that they are unexamined – to those who benefit from them” (1998: 112). As Connell (2000) articulated succinctly, “…(f)rom a long history of gender relations, many men have a sense of entitlement to respect, deference, and service from women. If women fail to give it, some men will see this as bad conduct which ought to be punished” (2000:3). Accordingly, the focus tends to demand an embracing of a de-constructive position that rails against the taken-for-granted locations of privilege and patriarchy that “…becomes embodied in personalities through conscious and unconscious processes of identity formation” (Snider, 1998:25). As Pease (2004) suggested, what is needed are ways to nurture, support and “…encourage the development of male subjectivities which reject domination” (2004:58).
Consider men’s behaviour change programs

This thesis is located within the broad field of interpersonal violence and, more specifically, concerns violence and abuse which takes place within the family, and which is carried out, performed, or perpetrated by men. Interventions responding to men’s violence have ranged from providing safe haven for women and children, criminal justice responses, ‘couples counselling’ for a jointly shared communication problem, working with the man to accept responsibility for his violence and abuse, through to interpretations of political activism such as the White Ribbon Campaign. While different strategies are available for intervening with men who are violent and abusive in the family, this research has concentrated on a particular form of intervention – engaging and working with perpetrators of this behaviour - in what is referred to in Victoria as a ‘men’s behaviour change program’ - MBCP (OWP, 2001:8). At the time of writing, there are 36 MBCPs for men who use family violence that fall under the umbrella of the Victorian peak body, No To Violence, Male Family Violence Prevention Association Inc (NTV). The majority of referrals to these services involve men who voluntarily access the service, or are ‘socially mandated’ to attend through a range of motivations. This research

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17 The White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) is the first male-led campaign against men’s violence in the world. It was established in Canada in 1991 and has spread to the United States, Europe and Australia. See Kaufman (2002) or www.whiteribbonday.org.au
18 Other responses include individual counselling for men assessed as unsuitable for a group program, or an intensive response program for clients assessed as unmotivated, resitant or otherwise unsuitable for a men’s behaviour change group.
19 A state of Australia.
20 Terminology here carries a lot of weight. While I will elaborate in more detail in Chapter 2, the focus of this method of intervention is the behaviour of perpetrators, grounded in a structural gender imbalance, that it is carried out to use power and control over another person or persons and, as it is a choice to use it, men can make other non-violent, ethical choices.
22 While men come ‘voluntarily’ to programs it might be more appropriate to consider this contact to be ‘socially mandated’ as there are usually similar reasons for men to access support. For example, these might involve an increase in the access and contact that a man has with children post separation and divorce, or his motivation in entering a program may be to ensure that his partner does not leave.
focuses specifically on this sector and, in particular, on the axioms that are claimed to frame the intervention strategies.

Mahon, Devaney & Lazenbatt (2009) made the point that, in theory, the structural foundation of ‘Duluth-based’ MBCPs and interventions adopted to work with men who use violence and abuse in the family needs to be adopted and implemented at a corporate, (political) and strategic level, and the services offered to the offender are monitored through line management and strategic oversight. In addition programmes that are accredited or approved are not only subject to the rigours of continual theoretical review but also state best practice guidelines for the line management, supervision and oversight of those working on programmes and with such offenders (2009:157).

Stark (2007) suggested that apart from their practical function as an alternative to incarceration, there remains ambiguity regarding whether the primary aim of intervention programs for men is “…prevention, punishment, anti-sexist education, treatment, support for intimate relationships or (to) provide information about the impropriety of abuse” (2007:40). Richards, MacLachlan and Scott (2004) described a MBCP for men who use violence and abuse in the family as typically (including) instruction around power and control issues, gender role attitude restructuring and anger management. That is, the focus is on the abuser assuming responsibility for his abusive behaviours, developing non-oppressive attitudes to women, and learning ways to manage and reduce angry and violent behaviours (2004:2).

Oberin (2006) broadened this description of profeminist programs to include assumptions that “…(men’s) violence is (also) premised on sexual inequality and (is

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23 By axioms I am referring to the taken-for-granted ‘truths’ that are claimed to underpin stated rhetoric and practice.
24 This work in Australia predominantly grew out of developments from the work done in Duluth, Minnesota. This has come to be known as the Duluth model. See Pence & Paymar (1993).
a reflection of) patriarchal\textsuperscript{25} values which confer male privilege to men in our society” (2006:8).

Group work intervention, as a response to men’s family violence and abuse, has been used in varying models for more than 30 years (Day, O’Leary, Chung & Justo, 2009). Some of the questions that pervade this intervention and the sector concern whether these programs are more about stopping violence or supporting men, do they take funding away from women’s support services, do they work, and under what illusions and expectations do men enter a voluntary program (Chung & Zannettino, 2005–06). Attention needs to be paid to the differing ambitions of various programs and the means by which these ambitions and foci are conveyed to the client. If programs are not guided by the clearly spelt out sole goal of safety for women and children and, following on from that, stopping men’s violence and abuse in the family\textsuperscript{26}, then there is a danger that they may minimise or “…reinforce the controlling and coercive behaviours and attitudes” of the participants (Pease, 1997:98).

More than two decades ago Hart (1988) identified that early interventions had a focus on working with men to assist them to overcome their emotional difficulties and to alleviate their pain. If men consider self-referring to a program that offers participants the opportunity to learn to express their feelings and increase their communication skills, then it would appear somewhat rhetorical to enquire as to

\textsuperscript{25} I will refer to hooks’ definition of patriarchy as being “(a) political–social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and anyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence” (2004:18). It is worth considering that the term patriarchy is not however without controversy, and at times it seems that the concept has become reified. For further critique see Lerner (1986), Smart (1995) or Whitehead (2002).

\textsuperscript{26} Stopping men’s violence and abuse does not necessarily equate with safety.
what extent are they expecting to de-construct patriarchy, sexism and male privilege, and to name their own behaviours as abusive?

On-going engagement with the validity of MBCPs as a suitable intervention for men’s violence continues. Francis (1996), in the first rigorous evaluation with Australian behaviour change programs, questioned whether programs for men are going to divert scarce resources away from women’s services as both may be competing for the limited funding available\(^{27}\). Linked to issues of funding, as Hearn (1998) pointed out, is the on-going debate as to where to locate programs; as a state-mandated intervention, or within the voluntary or community sector. Gondolf (2002) raised the concerns that some feminist activists have as to whether men can change, and whether the focus of the program and intervention is appropriate – individual change or structural change. Questioned here is the extent to which men’s violence and abuse is embedded within the structural framework of a patriarchal society and, thus, is working with individual men concerned more with treating symptoms rather than causes.

This is an important point in this research. It is the relationship between individual and structural change that is one of the key contentious issues in relation to MBCPs. If symptoms rather than causes are being addressed, does that suggest that MBCPs are a smokescreen for men to hold on to power? In providing a false hope for women, men may be able to save relationships that are oppressive. Many women have reported that more overt violence and abuse ceases, but more insidious manifestations are bought in to the relationship as the man learns a new ‘language of abuse’ through the program (Francis, 1996). If criminal behaviour has occurred,

\(^{27}\) See also, Chung & Zannettino, (2005–06), as previously mentioned.
there are concerns that programs may be used to avoid criminal sanctions. The option of sending a man to a program instead of a gaol sentence may be tempting to many magistrates, but it reinforces that there is often considerable difference in the perspectives on violence in private and violence in public. Programs can be, thus, seen as “…a weak substitute for a criminal penalty” (Victorian Law Reform Commission, 2006:378), or perhaps as Stark (2007:40) suggested “…a practical (response) as an economic alternative to gaol”\textsuperscript{28}. A northern hemisphere report noted that there was a divergence of views among sentencers as to whether a \textit{therapeutic intervention}\textsuperscript{29} or a custodial sentence was the most appropriate action to take against male perpetrators of family violence (Northern Ireland Office, 2008). If the demand to attend a program is made as a condition of an intervention order – or an undertaking – then men using violence and abuse may be less willing to consent to the making of an order\textsuperscript{30}.

Structural frameworks and factors within society construct the parameters for men’s violence to be justified. While forces of patriarchy have embedded men’s privilege to be seen by many as ‘natural’, examples exist of cultures where violence is abhorred, and the weight and displeasure of those societies turns upon those

\textsuperscript{28} This concern is very much alive and on the radar. In a recent court case a high profile rugby league player was charged with unlawful assault and was ordered by the magistrate to be dealt with through a diversion program. Charges were withdrawn after the player concerned was ordered to pay $3000AUD to a women’s support service and ordered to attend a MBCP. However, under current Victorian State Govt legislation there are only two Family Violence Divisions of the Magistrates Court that can direct a man to an assessment for a men’s behaviour change program: and this player did not attend at one of those. Criminal justice responses need to be both consistent and credible: attendance at a MBCP as a substitution for conviction not only sends a message to the community that violence is acceptable or reasonable, but that this response is not consistent with a coordinated and state-wide family violence prevention system (NTV Notes, May 2010).

\textsuperscript{29} My emphasis.

\textsuperscript{30} VLRC (2006:379) Submission 30. The Magistrates’ Court informed the commission that the use of undertakings in the specialist division of the court, where there was the available option of counselling orders, had seen an increase in the use of such undertakings. It is cautious to note, however, that the court statistics do “…not yet suggest that the increase in the use of undertakings is at the ‘expense’ of the making of intervention orders”.
choosing to engage in inappropriate behaviours. If it is accepted, as Dankwort (1999) proposed and with which this research concurs, that men’s violence is both socially constructed as well as individually willed through choice, then strategies aimed to prevent men’s violence would need to be oriented more towards structural and cultural change, as well as working with individual behaviour change on its own. If the best scenario is that these programs may stop some individual men from using violence and abuse against their family members, this does not equate with the prevention of men’s violence. As Laing (2002:23) enquired “…(i)t might well be asked of any…work with individual men…how well…the connections…at the individual level (are articulated) with efforts at the institutional and social levels”.

Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis (2000) located three different levels needed for a holistic intervention against men’s violence and abuse in the family. These consist of personal change in the behaviour of men who perpetrate violence, organisational change in the agencies that are charged with providing services to its male and female clients, and broader cultural and social change. In addressing the question of where men’s programs are situated within prevention strategies, Boyle (2001) used a health promotional framework of primary, secondary and tertiary paradigms in situating them within the third tertiary response. Support and intervention from the state is required at both the primary and secondary levels for other interventions to be successful. This infers that, acting in isolation, “…men’s behaviour change programs cannot be single handedly responsible for the elimination of male family violence” (2001:2). While there is some support for this

31 For example, the Ju/wasi and the Semai of West Malaysia, the Inuit and the Xinguano of the Amazon region of South America, and the Buid of the Philippines (Robbins, 1997). See also Briggs (1970) and Robarchek (1990).
33 I will continue to elaborate more on this point through this research.
latter perspective Korn, Purr and James (1996), for example, suggested that primary prevention strategies on their own rarely move beyond community attitude change. Acknowledging the essential need for greater social and cultural intervention, Tolman and Edelson (1995) poignantly noted that “…it is unlikely that psycho-educational groups aimed at a targeted subgroup of men would be the primary means of bringing about the desired social change in…men’s behaviours towards women” 34(1995:286).

Where there is cautious support for these programs from some key agents and agencies, there is the added emphasis that “…they may prove to be a useful addition (although not an alternative) to legal and justice response”35 (Frances, 1996:43). Echoing these themes, Dobash et al. (2000) suggested that “…while abuser programs are a vital part of the overall societal response to violence against women in the home, they certainly cannot be the only part” (2000:184). Gondolf (2002), in one of the most comprehensive evaluations of men’s stopping-violence programs to date in the United States, similarly argued that ‘batterer programs’ can be a vital part of a much wider framework of intervention. With a degree of optimism he suggested that the development and growth of MBCPs

(b)y trying to contain, change, and help (men to change) are finding ways to affect other men in other places. (This also sends)...a message that men can and must change their behaviour towards women. For these and many other reasons batterer counselling deserves to be continued but with more attention to the interventions system as a whole” (2002:218).

Gondolf’s (2002) stated position here would be in sympathy with the generally-held view across the majority of the local sector. However, achieving it is somewhat problematic when the other required interventions have not been in place. A recent

34 My emphasis.
35 It must be noted that legal and justice responses are not tackling fundamental structural causes either.
groundswell of movement has taken place in the Victorian context over the last 8 years with the development and establishment of dedicated family violence courts, specific family violence training for magistrates, and a MBCP for Court-mandated men underway. While these milestones at a state level may give renewed cause for optimism, the national Australian Commonwealth-funded ‘Violence Against Women: Australia says No!’ campaign, for example, received considerable criticism for its narrow focus across a range of issues such as hetero-specific focus, the limited portrayal of manifestations of abuse, inexperienced and naïve operators manning an over-stretched telephone hotline, and the inadequate support services that were put in place to be able to respond to callers concerns and safety (McKenzie, 2005). Again though, it is important to remember that this groundswell is taking place within the concerning socio / cultural violence-supportive attitudes and beliefs that were identified through VicHealth (2006 & 2009).

Questioning and structuring

In considering the previous sections, I directed the focus of enquiry upon the direction that this research will follow. In order to begin the process of critique, the following research questions have been formulated to underpin the exploration and reflection of these interwoven themes and concerns:

1. How are axioms of practice – the taken-for-granted foundations and frameworks for intervention in men’s behaviour change groups - produced and interpreted, appropriated and / or resisted by different actors and agencies in the sector?

2. How do agents establish jurisdiction within the sector, and reflect on engagement with the peak body, NTV?

3. How are external structural frameworks and influences located and woven into the interventions with voluntarily-referred individual men?
These lines of questioning were based on the assumption that sector-specific language and practice exist in a dialectic relationship, with each influencing and contributing to the other. The research questions were structured to enquire how language acts as a creative and controlling influence within a sector-specific context. Elucidating how subjects’ political positions are constructed, contested and resisted by the different actors and agencies was also a theme. Thus, the research questioning is both exploratory and explanatory. The exploratory focus mapped the order of discourse and interpreted text production, tracing contestation and contradiction both between and within discourses as they are experienced by actors and agencies. The explanatory focus investigated power as it was manifested through language, recognising that discourse analysis implies a theoretical commitment to analysing power and dominance between actors and agencies that have differentiated access to, and control over, discourse practices.

The above questions guided this research thesis which is divided into two parts. The first, chapters 1 through to 5, deals with the structure and process. Here I consider how I developed the theoretical foundations and frameworks through which to critique various factors that influence MBCPs as a response to men’s violence in the family.

Chapter two considers dominant discourses and definitions of men's violent and abusive behaviours. Definitions of violence are contested, and this contesting is itself a part of the process of the reproduction of and indeed opposition to violence. Violence, and what is meant by violence, is terminology that is constructed through the social, the cultural and through history. These constructions have the capacity to influence actual and potential policies on violence by structuring the interpretation
of violence through both the inclusion or exclusion of any possible responses. This chapter discusses differing theoretical explanations of men’s violent and abusive behaviours – as well as distinguishing between these explanations - as these have tended to reflect varying approaches to intervention. Many different theoretical foundations have been proposed to explain men’s family violence. These have ranged from a biological-based model, a psychological model, behavioural management explanations, interactional explanations based upon a family systems approach to communication and dialogue, and a feminist analysis that critiques patriarchy, male privilege and structural gender inequality.

In chapter three I outline the methodology that underpins this study. The logic of the research design and methods of data collection and analysis using the previous chapters’ frameworks and epistemology are outlined initially, along with issues of validity and reliability that acknowledge that there are potentially competing paradigms and differences in coming to a position of how to analyse data with any claim to ‘validity’. In this chapter I also reflect on my own enmeshment as the involved subjective researcher, and I consider challenges that I faced in conceptualising my own ‘truths’ and power over the research process when interpreting data. Engaging in self-reflexivity, writing this research as one of ‘all men’, and analysing the ‘self’ strengthened the discourse analysis through broadening my own discursively formed views, and by exposing how my constructions and subjective experiences interacted with my research. The third section of this chapter reflects on ethical issues that frame myself as the researcher within the dynamic of the process and stated outcomes. Here I consider not only my own position of being male and critiquing political action against men’s behaviour, but also how I stand to benefit from the very programs that I claim to be critiquing.
In the fourth chapter I focus the research lens upon the theoretical framework - a poststructuralist feminist analysis - that informs this research. Considered here initially are the issues of men critiquing men and the standpoint that this provides for doing feminist-influenced research. In reflecting on the privilege of men, it is important to consider how authentic is the critique of the privileged by the privileged; that is, how much distance can men take from their vantage points? In ascribing to a profeminist standpoint it is important to consider how men have engaged – or otherwise – with feminist theories because it may be interpreted as their motives being hidden behind a divide and conquer agenda, or to access and exploit knowledge about women’s situation. However, I will argue in this chapter that it would also be in men’s emancipatory interests to change. While there are concerns that men might embrace change in ways that respond to their perceived needs rather than addressing the socio / political structural status quo, men can respond and choose to reject their capacity to control and dominate through a greater understanding and engagement with the politics of gender. I consider in this chapter the validity of directing a poststructuralist lens to illuminate the various ways in which agents attempt to claim their expression of authenticity within the sector. I argue that poststructuralism is useful in deconstructing and isolating the issues of power, identity, and claims of authenticity. As the terms poststructuralism and postmodernism are often used interchangeably, I will distinguish between them and articulate why I believe that a poststructuralist framework sits more comfortably with the ambitions of this research. This chapter concludes by considering interplay between poststructuralism and feminism and naming some of the complementarities as well as the inherent tensions that exist between them.
The fifth chapter outlines the considerations inherent within a critical discourse analysis. This is reflected in how discourse is able to shed light on the ways in which the political hegemony, jurisdiction, and authenticity of dominant groups is established, justified and defended, and how various factors come to influence, and to be influenced by, the practice of discourse. Discourse is not everything, and it is prudent to state that there is always a danger of overstating a case for any particular methodological or theoretical framework. The practice of discourse reconciles the existing connection between a particular discursive position – the text, and the wider socio-cultural practice in which it is framed. It is useful in the first instance to address the relationship that exists between discourse and hegemony as hegemony is the discursive representation of power, and is constructed through multi-layered cultural and social parameters. In any critical analysis of discourse hegemony is a major paradigm within which authoritative legitimation is claimed. Consequently there are vested interests solidified with hegemony in undertakings by actors to attribute intention and purpose. This chapter considers how this comes to manifest through struggle and the ideological positioning and constructing of agents’ political agendas. This section concludes the theoretical framework that will guide this research.

Part two of this thesis engages with the diggings at the ‘coalface’ as the axioms upon which practitioners locate their interventions are critiqued. In this section, interview data is incorporated to deconstruct the juxtaposition of stated political and practice position, and the acting out of these claims. The primary focus of this section is not to assess the various recommendations made by key sector agents and practitioners, but to interpret the correlation between stated discourse and professional practice.
In chapter six I commence examining the key underlying foundations of programs through the theoretical lenses previously described. The claim of working under the philosophical framework of a feminist analysis of men’s violence is examined. While also providing a critique of criticisms of feminist analyses as applied to MBCPs, this chapter also questions the focus on the individual man’s violence towards individual women at the expense of the socio-political structural foundations in which this behaviour germinates. Other foundations that are held up to the lens of critique include the need for men to accept responsibility for change, and the influence and impact of acting out sex roles and choice. I also consider here the question as to whether a ‘one-size-fits-all’ program is a sufficient foundation upon which to engage with the diversities of men who present for intervention. This chapter concludes by reflecting upon the vexed issue of accountability and how that is dealt with - or not - given the espoused ambition of transparency.

Chapter seven continues the process of analysing foundational axioms by interpreting nomenclature that participants claim to establish jurisdiction over their expression of authenticity within the sector. As definitions of men’s violence and abuse are sites of contention, this chapter reflects on the naming process – including the place and language of ‘anger management’ within a behaviour-as-choice epistemology. The means and manner of representation by which programs sell their message and focus out in the community is vital in being able to draw men to an intervention, women to safety services, and funding to agencies and programs. This is critiqued in light of the publicly distributed brochures and their varying language that programs use to advertise where they believe lay the appropriate foci for their intervention.
While it is difficult to argue that issues such as class, ethnicity and culture are not the sole causes of violence, it would seem problematic not to consider these influences on men’s behaviour. This chapter analyses how workers and others engage with issues of social class in their interventions with men who use violence and abuse in the family. Also, many claims have been made regarding the effectiveness or otherwise of men’s behaviour change groups. It is worth considering claims of the effectiveness of this intervention in light of the political context in which it resides and, particularly, the vested interests that proponents have in claiming effectiveness as well as defining outcomes of success.

In chapter eight issues that demand an interaction between voluntary MBCPs and external agencies are considered. Initially, factors that intertwine poststructuralism and state policy are reviewed, particularly in light of constructing and selling subjectivities within the state. Given that there are concerns about relying on the context of the state\(^{36}\) in which MBCPs operate, the inherent implications for this location are addressed. It is also pertinent to reflect on the role of the criminal justice system in the context of the state, but also in the context of the work being done by the peak body NTV and its particular relationship with volunteer programs. This chapter concludes by critiquing the relationship between the internal program frameworks of MBCPs and the bigger picture of social and cultural change.

The final chapter draws together the arguments that have been articulated throughout this research. It re-visits the research questions and reflects upon the coalface engagement with the discourses that ground the work within the sector’s claimed axioms of practice and articulation.

\(^{36}\) That is, the nation state that sanctions, reinforces and replicates patriarchy
CHAPTER 2

EXPLAINING MEN’S VIOLENCE

Introduction

There has been a considerable increase in the last 20 years in shaping a response to the behaviour of men who perpetrate violence and abuse in the family (Day et al., 2009). It is useful initially to consider definitions and explanations of men's violence, as interventions with men are tightly woven around "...contesting and contested definitions and explanations of men's violence" (Hearn, 1998:14), and it is important to critique the philosophies, ambitions and stated claims of those interventionist theoretical frameworks.

Within the broad social science field, there are multiple theories that surround the etiology of men’s family violence, and there are different emphases that are reflected in different levels of intervention. These theories come from a range of disciplines such as sociology, social work, psychology, criminology, anthropology, cultural studies and biology. While theoretical explanations are vital in terms of informing direct worker practice, policy development, and the narratives of both the abused and the abuser, these same theories can also be used to perpetuate, minimise, and excuse men's violence (Pease, 2004).
This chapter will consider explanations for men’s violent and abusive behaviours. Definitions of violence are contested and, as Hearn (1998) suggested, “...(t)his contestation is itself (a) part of the process of the reproduction of and indeed opposition to violence” (1998:15). Violence, and what is meant by ‘violence’, is terminology that is constructed through the social, through culture and through history. Historical constructions of men’s violence have affected how agencies such as the state, the criminal justice system, the police, and interventionist organisations both define and respond to violence. In turn, these constructions have the capacity to influence actual and potential policies on violence which then structure the interpretation of violence through both the inclusion or exclusion of any possible responses. While both physical and sexual violence are criminal acts, other manifestations of these behaviours are more insidious and, in many cases, more easily minimised, justified or excused by many men. To some extent these have been impacted upon by changing historical and cultural processes: that is, what was regarded as acceptable behaviour at the turn of last century for example would generally be considered abusive behaviour within western culture by today's standards37. Clearly though, that acceptance has not been taken on board by all men.

Different theoretical explanations of men’s violent and abusive behaviours have tended to reflect varying approaches to intervention. Explanations have included a biological model which explains men’s behaviour as ‘naturally aggressive’ and thus ‘naturally’ inclined towards violent settlement of conflict; a psychological model which attributes men’s violence as resulting from their feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem and childhood developmental problems; behavioural management

37 Brophy and Smart (1982) pointed out that at the turn of the last century, if a woman left her husband without his permission then he had the right to physically restrain her. The overt and extreme violence and control inflicted on women by the Taliban, and the violence inherent in the act of female genital mutilation – both of which continue - are further examples.
explanations which have at their foundation the idea that violence is a learned response that can be unlearned through the recognition and control of anger\textsuperscript{38}; interactional explanations based upon a family systems approach to communication and dialogue; and a feminist-influenced, socio / political critique of patriarchy and structural inequality.

**Defining men’s violence**

The production of texts concerning men’s violences in the family has two main components. These are a description of the violence, and an attempt to define and account for the violence. Hearn (1998) suggested that while these two components may be analytically distinct, they are considerably interwoven with each other. First, the descriptions used can convey various defences from minimising through to denial and justification. Second, some accounts of violence are themselves violent when reframed as the power and control parameters and intentions that they are. The defining and naming of violence is a site of contention, and there is considerable diversity amongst agencies with regards to definitions and the multi-layered implications that differing definitions raise. Various debates about men’s violence concern contesting and contested definitions and explanations, and it is important to appreciate the changing specificity of the social, cultural and historical processes of naming. Men coming into contact with an agency intervention are bound to take on aspects of the nomenclature of that agency’s explanation - even if that only amounts to resisting and challenging it. If the act of naming provides individualistic explanations of the man’s behaviour, then there is a danger that men may use these explanations to minimise, justify, deny, or continue to perpetrate their violent and abusive behaviours.

\textsuperscript{38} This is often referred to as ‘anger management’.
As the process of defining violence has both short-term micro dimensions, and more long-term historical and macro dimensions (Hearn, 1998), a broad perspective is important. How broad that perspective should be is debatable. The term ‘violence’ is used by some agents to include only physical and sexual violence\(^39\); other times it includes non-criminal acts that others may term ‘abuse’ (Laing, 2002). Some agencies would regard ‘abuse’ as less serious and would disagree with its use due to the potential of minimising the seriousness of violent behaviour\(^40\). Dobash and Dobash (1992) suggested that definitions of violence should consider such factors as the intention of harm – physical or otherwise, a focus on power and control over another person, and the experience of the person to whom the violence is directed. Hearn (1998) pointed out that along with definitions of interpersonal violence, structural definitions of violence also need careful articulation. Structural violence may be interpreted as societal patterns of men’s violence to their partners, various forms of institutional violence, the violence of world-scale inequalities, state-sanctioned violence such as war, and social relations such as fatherhood, patriarchy, or capitalism that have underwritten violence (1998:16). Embracing this more broad perspective, Ashcraft (2000) suggested that violence in the family perpetrated by men, "...is both fostered and sustained by a broader system of inequalities that subordinates women" (2000:6). Stark (2007) took this point even further suggesting that “...(t)he entrapment (and coercive control) of women in personal life is hard to discern because many of the rights it violates are so basic...(and)...taken-for-granted...that their abridgement passes largely without notice” (2007:15). This reinforces a previously mentioned point that what is at stake here is a human rights issue.

\(^39\) Due to these behaviours being criminal acts.
\(^40\) See Ashcraft (2000).
This research is dealing with gendered violence within heterosexual relationships; that is, violence perpetrated by men against their partners. In speaking of gender, I am referring to the “…individual, cultural and institutional ways in which biological sex is given social existence in any particular context or period” (Segal, 1990:92). The Women’s Safety Strategy (OWP, 2002) made the point that violence against women is often described as gender-based violence to reflect the fact that certain forms of violence are predominantly perpetrated by men against women. The term ‘gender-based violence’ also acknowledges that power differences and inequality between men and women in society play a significant role in perpetrating violence against women and fear of violence (2002:18).

Poon (1995) expressed concern at the way in which differing terminologies can lead to a degendered analysis of men’s violence. While McNeely and Mann (1990) argued that violence is a human issue as opposed to a gender issue, Berns (2001), however, pointed out that feminist analyses of violence in the family have considerably emphasised the role of gender and power in abusive relationships including, in particular, that the overwhelming majority of those experiencing the abuse are the female partners of men. Berns (2001) noted that "...(t)he first major strategy of the patriarchal-resistance discourse is to reframe the problem as 'human violence'...(as)...by removing gender from the framing of the problem, this perspective undermines the role of gender and power in abusive relationships" (2001:265).

Degendering violence is also a strategy for arguing that both men and women are equally violent in the family. The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980) has frequently been used in an attempt to justify

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41 That is not to say that violence in gay and lesbian relationships is not gendered violence. I do not address this issue in this research as I stay within the heterosexual framework that represents the vast majority of participants at programs.
this perspective. Thorough critiques\(^{42}\) have dismissed the argument that violence in the family is equally distributed between the sexes. Others such as Saunders (1988), for example, have argued that the CTS fails to consider the amount of women's violence that was retaliated in self-defence, and the amount and the extent of, and the reason for the injuries that were suffered by both men and women. This scale also focuses on counting acts of violence\(^ {43}\) without taking into consideration other manifestations of power and control tactics such as psychological and verbal abuse, and the use of threats, implied or otherwise, to maintain intimidation. While Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) did admit that men repeated their violence more often, and that women were much more likely to be trapped within an economically dependent relationship, Wadham (2000) pointed out that “…these important qualifications are ignored by…men-as-victims advocates, who simply assert that similar incidents of violent behaviour mean that the violence, the circumstances leading up to it, and its effects and consequences, are also the same” (2000:6). In advocating this perspective, the issue of gender is removed from the debate.

Men’s rights activists have endeavoured to convince many that the violences of men and women within the family are quantitatively and qualitatively equal\(^ {44}\). It would seem that if this polit was working to end men’s violence then they would be acknowledging that the vast majority of violence experienced by men is perpetrated by other men. There is a strong implication from this position that if women’s violence can be demonstrated then there is no foundation to continue neither to campaign against men’s violence – usually interpreted as ‘attacking’ men - nor to

\(^{42}\) See, for example, Dobash & Dobash (1992), Nazroo (1995) or Taft, Hegarty, & Flood (2001).

\(^{43}\) As reported by only one partner in an anonymous telephone survey.

\(^{44}\) There was a measure of support for this in the VicHealth (2006:23) survey where respondents reported high levels of agreement that perpetration of violence and abuse is likely to be equally undertaken by both men and women within the family. There is obviously a lot of work to do here as the later VicHealth (2009:8) report showed an increase in 22% of people in 2009 believing that domestic violence is perpetrated equally by both men and women compared with 9% in 1995.
expect men to sympathise with a need to engage in broader change (Roberts, 1992). If there is an essentialist argument put forward by some feminists that all men are inherently violent, then men-as-victims activists are likely to continue to gain support. I would also suggest that if gender diversity is the only focused basis for oppression and issues and influences of class, sexuality and race are ignored, then men-as-victims activists will be better positioned to press their own claims. It is worth considering Bograd’s (1990) poignant observation that a gendered analysis of violence “…goes beyond the sex of individuals to analyse how male / female relations are socially structured” (1990:134).

The terminology ‘domestic violence’ is probably used most frequently in discourses that emanate from the police, the courts, and the media. This - and other related terminology such as ‘family violence’, ‘intimate violence’ or ‘conjugal violence’ for example, generally focuses the responsibility for the violence onto the family as a structure or system. V-NET (1995), the precursor to NTV, pointed out that ‘domestic violence’ has been preferred by some agencies, however because it covers violence in situations and relationships other than those within a traditional family. Others associate the term ‘domestic violence’ with the expression “just a domestic (dispute)” as it is used to deny, minimise and justify a lack of response to violence. Some use the term ‘domestic violence’ to refer specifically to violence between adults within couples (1995:13).

The term ‘family violence’ has been preferred by other statutory bodies and agencies due to its more broad recognition of the inclusion of the extended family. For

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45 I make the point further in this thesis that putting any form of pernicious behaviour under the umbrella of ‘violence’ potentially opens the door for men’s rights factions to claim gender symmetry in the perpetration of violence.
46 See, for example, Daly (1975) or Dworkin (1981).
47 See, for example, Thorne-Finch (1992).
48 My emphasis.
49 As used by police to describe incidents.
example, Seth-Purdie (1996), in a submission that seems to have influenced the then incumbent conservative Howard federal government, stated that

(approaches which focus on one aspect of violence between family members, such as male partner violence against women (as per the 1993 National Strategy on Violence Against Women), or child abuse, without taking into account other forms may not lead to a proper understanding of the role violence plays in relationships between family members and individuals and social institutions generally (1996:2).

Seth-Purdie (1996) proposed that the broad terminology ‘family violence’ is more acceptable as “...violence within families can affect men, women, children and the elderly” (1996:2), and thus reducing incidence of family violence requires “...changes in social child-rearing practices...(and also requires) significant changes in attitudes towards partnerships in marriage” (1996:1). Similarly, the Victorian Community Council Against Violence (2002) defined ‘family violence’ as

violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour in current or past familial and intimate relationships. This encompasses not only physical injury but direct or indirect threats, sexual assaults, emotional and psychological torment, economic control, property damage, social isolation and behaviour which causes a person to live in fear (2002:2)

Again though, this terminology is considerably degendered, and is also not acknowledging of other forms of violence that takes place within the family context such as elder abuse or violence by mothers towards their children for example.

Terminology is, thus, important from a theoretical, empirical and political perspective. Hearn (1998) suggested that while it is important to acknowledge “...the relational nature of gender and the relational context of violence...it is equally important not to reduce violence (to the status of a) product of the relationship” (1998:28). For example, the terminology “family violence” suggests that it is the family that is responsible for, and that does, the violence. Accordingly, what is a political problem is reduced to somewhere other than the cohort of men or
the particular man in question. In fact, the concerns of many activists and writers (Walker, 1990; Kurz, 1997; Meyer 2001, for example) were that gender-neutral definitions would disguise sexism, male dominance and gendered power relations in the family, and deflect attention away from women. This would then enable political action in challenging violence against women\(^{50}\) to be deflected to an analysis of family and relationship dynamics.

Watson (2001) took umbrage at the way that ‘domestic violence’ is defined as broadly as suggested above through the VCCAV (2000). He proposed that “…(t)he construction of violence as any behaviour by the man which leaves the woman living in fear lies behind accountability structures that rely heavily on the woman’s interpretation of the man’s behaviour” (2001:92). Watson (2001) acknowledged that it is imperative to validate the woman’s narrative in assessing her safety. However, if relied upon alone, it can result in the man being held responsible for the woman’s emotional well-being and for the well-being of the relationship. This accountability method equates with a self report, which has been critiqued widely for its limitations...Studies on victimisation illustrate that individuals, regardless of gender, are more likely to blame the other party for the dispute (2001:92).

As indeed they do. However, perhaps the point is being missed here, and that is that women who are experiencing violence and abuse, through the opportunity to finally be able to speak their unique narratives, are saying that they do not feel safe for many reasons. There have been limited opportunities for women to fully articulate the range of controlling behaviours that they feel have been used to contain their sense of agency within the relationship. While stressing the pervasiveness of violence and abuse, and recognising the need not to undermine the seriousness of these words, Ashcraft (2000) proposed that the naming inherent in dominant discourses has constrained the choices of the battered women's movement, has

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\(^{50}\) A structural phenomenon linked to patriarchy and male privilege.
silenced specific women, and has left dominant discourses unchallenged. She suggested "...developing a broader concept of domestic control, which could incorporate domestic violence but would also allow for (naming of) other forms of relational inequality" (2000:7)\textsuperscript{51}.

In the local context in which this thesis is located, the Victorian State peak body, NTV, uses the terminology "male family violence" to include

violent, abusive and controlling behaviour of males (including young, adolescent and adult men) against family members, without any intention to limit the discussion or exclude any particular behaviour by doing so. (While) NTV recognises that violence can be used by males against other male family members, (the primary focus of the work of NTV and male behaviour change programs is) on male violence against women partners and their children(1999:5).

In using the terminology “male family violence” (V-NET, 1995; NTV, 2006), NTV (2006) states that “...(i)n common with most feminist theorists, NTV does not see a natural link between masculinity and violence and rejects any attempts to explain violent behaviour by men as a product of their biology or physiology” (2006:33).

This would appear confusing and contradictory. The term used by the peak body is the biological adjective ‘male’ rather than the noun ‘men’. This is somewhat problematic for me vis-à-vis the location of the behaviour. I believe that the term ‘men’s family violence’, adapted from Hearn (1998:4)\textsuperscript{52}, sufficiently addresses the issues at stake for several reasons. First, there is the immediate issue of the correlation of sex and behaviour. Unlike ‘male family violence’ there is no

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\textsuperscript{51} Ashcraft (2000:7) suggested terminology for other domains of dominant partner abusive behaviour such as "domestic dodging, domestic distortion, domestic neglect, and domestic domination".

\textsuperscript{52} Hearn (1998:4) used the term “men’s ‘violences’ in the family” to “…acknowledge the plurality of men’s violences”. While in sympathy with the plurality, I believe that ‘men’s family violence’ is a sufficient foundation on which to consider other abuses by men –such as male privilege and patrilineal descent for example - which may not be regarded as violent and do not reside under the umbrella of criminal behaviour. I am in sympathy with ‘men’s violence in the family’ though I believe it to be a little more cumbersome: somewhat akin to saying ‘men who use violence and abuse’ when ‘perpetrator’ is more easy and accessible. From a purely practical perspective I wanted to title this research “Staking a Claim” and was not able to fit ‘men’s violence in the family’ into the allowable word limit.
ambiguity about possible biologically pre-determined behaviour. Doubts with regards to inevitability to violence by men are removed by dispensing with the biological variable of ‘male’. Accordingly, the genesis of the behaviour must be sourced elsewhere; that is, in the socio / cultural environment. Second, it discounts that there may be a particular manifestation of violence that is uniquely male. Third, unlike the terminology ‘family violence’ the behaviour (the violence) is not reduced to the status of a product of the relationship which would suggest that it is the family that is responsible for, and who does, the violence. Thus, the focus is maintained on a political problem. Fourth, it is more accurate in attributing the violence to men as they are the doers of the violence. As men are the doers – the performers / perpetrators of this behaviour, then it is men’s responsibility to stop. Fifth, it reinforces the point that men’s violence, acted out for reasons of power and control over others, originates from men and, in particular, is taught by men to other men and boys. This teaching can be overt or covert as boys learn to take on scripts of masculinities as taught by their elders (Walker, 1990; Hearn, 1998; Pease, 2002).

The violence and abuse that men perpetrate in the family varies in form and process. While physical and sexual violence are both criminal acts, there are other manifestations of men’s attempts to dominate and control that those who experience it often regard as more insidious and frequently more fearful. Of particular concern is violence that is threatened or potential. Many women speak of the experience of ‘walking around on eggshells’ in fear of the potential of what might happen to them or their children, and how this threat constantly hanging over their heads is used as a means of control. The broadness of men’s abusive behaviours in the family can also take the form of

53 In 1995 The Crimes Act also included the offence of stalking which incorporates following someone, keeping them under surveillance, constantly harassing or loitering around someone’s known locations.
• Emotional abuse that includes not respecting another person’s feelings, shaming, belittling, or manipulating the way that others may feel;

• Social isolation that limits or controls the movements and contact that the man’s partner has with external others such as friends and relatives;

• Verbal abuse that includes ridicule, name-calling, disparagement, put-downs, or other attacks on the man’s partners’ being;

• Economic abuse which includes excluding women from access to shared funds, controlling her income and, thus, access to external support, excessive demands and accountability for household finances;

• Spiritual abuse that disparages the man’s partners’ religious beliefs and right to practice and follow her choice of faith;

• Spatial abuse whereby the man claims and takes ownership of household space;

• Male privilege that, for many men, means that simply through virtue of being male they have a status that privileges them over women and children. This is frequently reinforced through sex role expectations and a clear delineation between the public and private spheres (NTV, 2006; Stark, 2007; Day et al., 2009)

Fletcher (in Day et al., 2009) made the point that while categorising behaviours can be useful for men to understand the full range of their behaviours54, the practice of categorising can produce its own range of problems, not the least of which is decontextualising behaviour whereby “…(d)efining violence as categorised acts can have the effect of separating the actions from the intentions (which renders invisible the) socio-cultural context of male domination” (2009:116)55. More than two decades ago Stanko (1985) proposed that separating assault from more broad-based intimidation renders each act of assault

as an aberration or a random occurrence (that is viewed as) a person problem. However, if they are linked together…new information on the overall treatment of women by men (is generated). What emerges

54 Within the sector, this was initially incorporated through the use of the power and control wheel developed within the Duluth model.
55 Fletcher (2009:116) identified 10 separate possible problematic consequences arising from categorising men’s violent and abusive behaviours.
is not random or isolated: (w)hat emerges is a flood of common experiences. (This identifies)...that men’s power is not an individual, but a collective one (1985:57).

The major report released through VicHealth (2006) raised concerns regarding the limited understanding of many respondents in their awareness of the serious nature of emotionally abusive and controlling behaviours. This project revealed that there was a high level of belief that both men and women are equally likely to be the perpetrators of violence within the family. Further, 17% did not believe that socially isolating one’s partner, or controlling them by controlling and denying money, is a form of violence. The three year follow-up (VicHealth, 2009:7) revealed similar attitudes with 25% of respondents in the general community not believing that “...controlling a partner by denying them money” was a form of domestic violence; and 15% not agreeing that “…controlling the social life of a partner by preventing them from seeing friends or family” was domestic violence. It was not surprising that men were significantly more likely to hold attitudes that serve to support violence than were women.

That men appear, as a rule, to generally have more narrow definitions of what are regarded as their violent and abusive behaviours is, in part, a product of men’s greater structural dominance within society and, as Hearn (1998) suggested, "...partly a consequence of the particular form of the...social relationship with the woman in question" (1998:117). It should be noted, however, that there has been considerable feminist scholarship highlighting the connection between men’s violence against women in the public sphere, and men’s violence against women in

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56 Again, are these particular behaviours violent or abusive? See Ashcraft (2000), Laing (2002), Stark (2007) or Victorian Family Violence Protection Act (2008).
the private domain of the family. Again, this highlights for me the importance of re-framing men’s violence and abuse in the family as a human rights issue.

It is worth considering a note of caution, however, with regards to gender inequality and the continuum of violence. There would be a concern that using the terminologies ‘violence’ and ‘oppression’ as mutually interchangeable would construct “…violence as a residual category into which anything pernicious or degrading might be thrown” (Liddle, 1989:766). Thus, the concept and political location of violence loses its authenticity if all forms of gender inequality and oppression are included under the one umbrella. Liddle (1989), in sympathy with Ashcraft’s (2000) relationship and domestic inequality framework, made the point that upholding “…leers, glances and patronising jokes as cases of violence is perhaps a misguided way to make the point that these forms of behaviour are oppressive” (1989:766). This could perhaps be best summed by drawing on Walker’s (1990) contextual observation where she expressed concern that, regardless of the actual language used, expanded definitions of violence are “…detached from (their) grounding in the social relations in which events and activities take place” (1990:103)

As discussed, definitions of violence are contested, and the terminology of violence and what is meant by violence has been constructed through the social, through culture and through history. I will now elaborate on differing theoretical explanations of men’s violence in the family.

57 See, for example, Daly, (1975), Dworking, (1985) or Lerner (1986).
58 My emphasis.
Theoretical explanations

Many different theoretical explanations have been proposed in an attempt to isolate the causes of the behaviours that men perpetrate in the family. These have their genesis in a range of different analytical, conceptual and disciplinary traditions. I will discuss the more generally proposed explanations, recognising that there are often considerable overlaps suggested for identifying social, individual, biological, cultural, structural, political and economic reasons as causing men’s family violence.

It is my position in this research that there is no singularly adequate explanation of men’s violence towards women and, further, that differing explanations are not necessarily in competition with others. As Edwards and Hearn (2004) suggested

(i)nsights from two or more approaches can be combined, for example, structural processes (can) operate through...individuals with their own biographies. Multi-level, multi-layered explanations (can also) include combinations of individual, family, (and) structural explanations (2004:44).

While I concur with Edwards and Hearn (2004) however, in ‘nailing my structural foundations to the mast’, and as I will expand on further through this research, it is inherently problematic to consider isolating in particular narrow psychological explanations, as there is considerable potential to skew policy from the social and political concerns that need to remain as the focus.

(i) Behaviour as biology

Explanations for men’s violence and abuse have often been associated with a presumption of male innate biological aggression\(^{59}\). Frequently there are justifications given for men’s violence as being ‘the natural way’ that men are.

\(^{59}\) See, for example, Tiger, (1965) or Connell’s critique (1995).
Competition for, and maintaining control over, sexual and reproductive partners is a frequently given reason for men behaving violently towards their partners and towards other men. Other biological approaches have targeted such factors as hormonal differences, physical size, and competition for territory and instinct (Lorenz, 1966). Inherited along with masculine genes are, as Connell (1995) critiqued, “…tendencies to aggression, family life, competitiveness, political power, hierarchy, territoriality, promiscuity and forming men’s clubs” (1995:46). Explanations such as these have been open to broad critique for not taking into account powerful variables such as historical context, cultural relativity, morality, power, and, in particular, choice. If there did exist a predisposition for violence from men then, clearly in terms of choices, men are able to resist this propensity for this behaviour as the majority of men do not engage in acts of violence towards their partners or others. While the vast majority of violence emanates from men (Connell, 1995), not all men are violent. Accordingly, if men are ‘naturally’ violent, then the biological supposition begs the question as to why all men are not violent?

In a variance of biological theories, the findings of neuroscience vis-à-vis outbursts of anger and violence - particularly from men, have come under scrutiny over the last decade. For example, Kessler (2006) highlighted the prevalence of what is termed ‘intermittent explosive disorder’ (IED) that appears to underlie some episodes of violent outbursts. Proponents of theories of IED suggest that there are biological and structural foundations to a man’s violence that demand treatment as a medical problem rather than “…treatment of character, beliefs and action” (Gondolf, 2006:20). This has implications for MBCPs - most of which operate on a foundation of education, cognitive behavioural methods, choice and individual

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60 I am using the word ‘violence’ here to refer to physical and sexual violence. It is important to reflect on men’s use of other subtle forms of domination such as male privilege and coercive control.
responsibility, and the legal arena which is finding that “...neuroscience is increasingly identifying associations between biology and violence that appear to offer courts evidence relevant to criminal responsibility” (Eastman & Campbell, 2006:31). However, as Gondolf (2006:21) pointed out, “...the association between brain activity and violent behaviour is just that – an association and not necessarily a ‘cause’”61.

Turner (1994) proposed explaining men’s violence and aggression as due to the biological basis of the levels of testosterone in males. In a degree of support for this position, Kemper (1990) suggested that there needs to be at least an acknowledgment of the overlaps between testosterone and socio / cultural frameworks. However, while there have been studies62 that correlate higher levels of testosterone in males with their aggressive behaviour, studies are, at best, inconclusive and need to carefully consider those variables mentioned previously.

I do not address in this research psychiatric illness or acquired brain injuries, symptoms of which may manifest through violent or abusive behaviour. For example, Post-Concussion Syndrome can play out in sufferers’ experiencing “…low frustration control, anger outbursts, poor impulse control, mood disorders…and irrational behaviours” (Swinburne University of Technology, 2005:6). Certainly many men who have presented at behavioural interventionist agencies have exhibited these and similar symptoms and patterns of behaviour. Diagnosis and treatment appears to involve much more than a cognitive behavioural assessment though this may be part of ongoing treatment. I also differentiate between the problems that IED suffers the same problem as many ‘mental illnesses’. When symptoms are seen, the supposition is that there is, thus, evidence of an illness.

61 See, for example, Kreuz and Rose (1972) or Dabbs, Frady, Carr and Besch (1987).
aforementioned conditions and psychological explanations for men’s violence in the family which I will now critique.

(ii) Psychological explanations

Contrasting with biological explanations of men’s violence and abuse, psychological frameworks propose attributing men’s violent behaviours to “…intra-psychic conflict, personality disorders, denial mechanisms, developmental deficiencies (or) impaired ego, narcissism, traumatic childhood (and) masochism” (Dankwort, 1992:35). That is, the violent and abusive behaviour of men is a result of their own upbringing and childhood developmental problems.

Helping the man by focusing on him as an ‘individual in pain’ rather than addressing the beliefs and attitudes that he uses to justify his behaviour, was given authenticity by many through the intersection of men’s liberation and mythopoetic men’s politics (Gondolf, 2002). Men’s liberation is founded on sex role theory which suggests that the roles that men are required to adhere to within society are the causes of the majority of men’s malaise (Pease, 2002). According to sex role theory, dominant masculinities – such as men as providers, having to portray emotional stoicism, to constantly compete with other men for example, have all contributed to men being the unrecognised ‘victims’ of gender relations. When men’s liberation meets the input of ‘men’s mythology’, as exemplified by Bly (1990), Keen (1991), Moore and Gillette (1990) or Biddulph (1994), there is a concern that programs take on a collective brotherhood approach that incorporates storytelling, mythology and ritual so as to bond men together in a united, supportive sense of common pain, grief and loss. Many opponents of this approach see considerable danger in the possibilities of promoting collusion among men as it gives space for them to blame women for their
problems. Hart (1988) suggested that ‘male bonding’ to the collectively shared brotherhood is different from simply friendship among men, as it is an act of maintaining power over women by developing a unity between men - one in which women are emphatically unwelcome. Sex role theory and the ‘collective of men’ framework that it espouses has been thoroughly critiqued for its inadequacies in dealing with power, class, agency, privilege (Pease, 1996; Connell, 1997).

What would appear to be of concern here is that the behaviour is frequently not the site of attention, as internal dynamics are given as the driving reasons behind the man’s actions and choice. Implied here are factors and contributing variables other than the man accepting responsibility for his behaviour. This approach has been widely critiqued\(^{63}\) due to the way in which it pathologises, reduces, excuses, minimises and, in particular, individualises men's violence while ignoring the input and influence of culture and social relations\(^{64}\).

Given that most children in Western society are raised by their mothers as the primary caregiver, there would seem to be a considerable danger in blaming women - mothers - for the man's emotional and psychological well-being, and hence, for his violence. There has been increased interest in the effects of infant attachment and the role that this contributes to the man's behaviour and capacity to relate in adult life (Scott & Wolfe, 2000). The quality of the infant / caregiver relationship lays the foundation for the man's later ability to form relationships. Buttell and Jones (2001) pointed out that this theoretical basis suggests that amongst abusive men


\(^{64}\) This is not to say that men’s subjectivities should be ignored. There are ways of engaging with men’s subjectivities that are not pathologising. My position as a therapist and counsellor is that I believe that I cannot work legitimately with men without an understanding and therapeutic articulation with the client as to how he has learnt, understands, and practices masculinities within the social and cultural context in which he lives.
"...excessive interpersonal dependency...is a consequence of insecure attachment in childhood" (2001:376). While earlier studies have found a relationship between a man's high interpersonal dependency and his propensity to perpetrate violence (Laing, 2002:6), Buttell and Jones (2001) did not find that court-mandated perpetrators exhibited greater interpersonal dependency than a comparison group of non-violent men.

Echoes of mother blaming are found to be a consistent theme throughout history. Chodorow (1978) proposed that men's behaviours and need to dominate is in response to the coping with the need to separate from a previously controlling mother65 and to identify with the father. That is, a cultural prohibition on tenderness and nurturing - identified as female traits and learned through the mother - leads men to dominating and violent behaviours. Jukes (1993) suggested that it is the difficulty with which boys develop relationships with their mothers that sees them, at least to some degree, carry a potential, and perhaps inescapable, source of ambivalence towards women into their adult life. Violence then erupts in a man's relationships and marriage as a result of his crude attempts to retrieve similar feelings of nurturance and security that were initially provided by the mother (Pease, 2002).

An attempted explanation of men's violence that reverts back to some form of infant-related manifestation is that men's violence is an acting out of a childish petulance at not getting their own way over issues that, for all intents and purposes, are somewhat trivial. Biddulph (1994) reduced explanations for men's violence to a form of regressive, childish carry-on as “...often they are infantile 'baby issues':

65 And more often than not the only available parent figure.
'She didn’t fix my meal right’; She wants to go out with her friends and leave me all alone at night’; ‘She talked to another guy’; ‘She wants to visit her mother’” (1994:90). Usually underlying these perspectives is that men are violent because they have in some way been abused and through their upbringing appear to not be ‘whole’.

Jennings (1987) argued that men who are violent and abusive can best address and indeed overcome their violence by learning to support and nurture each other in a safe, supportive and relatively unstructured group setting. This is about looking inwards in order to feel better about being oneself. Through this interaction, men are able to listen and be listened to and in the process to ascertain an understanding of the hurt and the injustices that have been perpetrated upon them. Theophilou (2007) believed that access to a ‘men’s group’ can help men to break out of holding patterns of emotional isolation and can relieve men of the burden and oppression of that isolation. Through this process men are able to explore their roles as men, as husbands / partners, as fathers. He also stated that men’s violence can be addressed through a man attending a men’s group, as men would be less violent if they dropped their masks and learned to communicate. However, to my mind it would seem problematic that men are ‘navel gazing’ at symptomatic consequences rather than looking for a deeper structural analysis of understanding.

Browne, Saunders and Staecker (1997) proposed ending men's violent and abusive behaviours by process-driven psychodynamic groups designed for

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66 A group of men, not a MBCP.
67 Theophilou pushed his own barrow in making a documentary of a men’s group that he facilitated called “Sons of the Fathers – Inside a Men’s Group”. The publicity states that this documentary will be able “…to demonstrate that men’s groups are legitimate agents for social change”. For a critique of this documentary see French (2007).
decreasing (the man's) isolation and increasing (his) emotional investment in others' welfare, (b) exploring the (man's) childhood roots of sex role expectations and shame-based behaviours, and (c) increasing the (man's) capacity to express feelings directly and responsibly (1997:267).

As a therapeutic practitioner, I believe that it is important that violent men – any man for that matter - address the pain and suffering in their lives. However, there would be a considerable danger in suggesting that the means by which men's violence is stopped is through treating their pain. Hart (1988) proposed that psychological and therapeutic responses to men’s violence assume that men can be nurtured into non-violent behaviours. There would appear to be a difficult tension here in that these approaches lean strongly towards portraying men as victims, a position which may be used by the man and, in particular, possibly colluded with by facilitators of men’s violence interventions, to excuse and justify the man's behaviour. Perpetration of violence does not necessarily correlate with having experienced emotional or physical pain and suffering as many men who have experienced abuse do not go on to inflict those same behaviours. Psychological explanations also fail to consider gender difference as while both male and female children experience pain and suffering in childhood, the vast majority of violences within the family are perpetrated by men (Taft, Hegarty and Flood, 2001).

Hearn (1998) made the point that normalising men’s violence within dominant frameworks of masculinity is not necessarily in dissonance with psychological or social psychological reports of men’s violence. That there are violent men, he argued,

is not the product of psychological traits – all men can be violent. However,...being violent is an accepted, if not always an acceptable, way of being a man. Violence is (an available) resource for demonstrating and showing (that) a person is a man. (Accordingly, men’s) violence can be considered in relation to the social category
of men, men’s structural locations, and the tension(s) between men as a gender class and (the) differences among men (1998:36-7).

(iii) Behavioural / anger management

One of the fundamental axioms upon which MBCP intervention is based is that the man’s behaviour “...is a choice...(and) although (he) might have been socialised to believe he has the right to control women and children, he can still choose...to learn and use non-violent ways of relating” (NTV, 2006:33). One of the most frequently used explanations and methods of intervention with violent men has been that of ‘anger management’. This response relies upon the premise that the cause of men’s violence is extreme anger over which he has no control (Gondolf & Russell, 1986). Anger management intervention suggests that by recognising the thoughts and corresponding physiological arousal that accompanies strong emotions such as anger, then the emotions can be changed and alternative behaviour can be invoked (Navaco, 1975). That is, if the anger can be controlled, the man will not escalate behaviour to violence. Techniques of anger management also include alerting the perpetrator to the nature and severity of the abuse, as well as inviting consideration of the sex role expectations that men have of both themselves and of their partners. Most MBCPs would incorporate degrees of these influences and techniques.

Concerns have been raised about the use of anger management as an appropriate intervention for men who perpetrate violence and abuse in the family. Schecter (1982) suggested that violence and abuse is not necessarily driven by anger, but is a consequence of patriarchy, male domination and the socially structured desire for men to control women. That being the case, men choosing to use violence may be able to reduce anger management to a set of techniques that enables them to maintain control in a perhaps less physically violent manner while still continuing
their abuse at many and varied levels. Gondolf and Russell (1986) identified 6 shortcomings in the use of anger management as an intervention to stop men’s violence in the family. First, anger management directly implies that the victim has provoked the anger. Such an assumption directly implies that the man’s partner is in some way responsible and that she needs to change her behaviour in order to stop the man’s abuse. Second, the anger management model provides no accounting for the premeditated controlling behaviours that go hand-in-glove with violence and abuse. Although a woman may cease being physically and verbally abused, manipulating and isolating abuse has been well known to continue through either direct or indirect controlling or belittling behaviours (Edleson, Eisikorits & Guttman, 1985). Third, anger management provides an easy route for the man to diffuse and relegate responsibility for his abuse and to prolong the denial of his behaviour. The narratives of violent men often differ markedly from those of their partners, and research has suggested that men make a choice when, where, how and with whom they are going to be violent when they are angry (Paymar, 2000). Within the texts that men use to talk about their violence, excuses such as denial, minimising, and justifying are acute. Excuses are about the man (possibly) accepting blame for his behaviour, but certainly not responsibility. Other variables seen as being responsible for the man's behaviour include having been abused himself in the past, the impairment of alcohol or other drugs, or internal factors within the man such as stress or mental or psychiatric disturbance (Hearn, 1998:122). While there may be some therapeutic value in the man dwelling on his own emotional turmoil, this can further lead to victim blaming and attitudes of justification and deservedness of his behaviour.

68 This is a theme that is also consistent with systems theory.
Fourth, there is a danger that anger management is portrayed both to the man and within the greater society as the panacea that provides the 'quick fix'. This perspective represents a potential danger to women who have been abused. Gondolf and Fisher (1988) found that a man's participation in a ‘perpetrator program’ was the single most influential factor in the woman returning to her relationship with the man. If not criminally mandated to attend a program, the vast majority of men appear to present because their partners have left them, are threatening to leave them, or are taking legal and criminal action. Anger management may be used by men to lull their partners into returning by claiming that they have 'the problem' under control. In fact, this attitude by men would seem to amount to further manipulation and control of their partners. Submissions to VLRC Review of Family Violence Laws (2006) identified that concerns about “…programs offering ‘false hope’ to partners of those (men) attending, making them more willing to stay in the relationship even though no change in behaviour may result from attendance at the program”69 (2006:378).

Fifth, anger management does not hold society and the community to task as the focus becomes one of "…a problem of psychologically deficient men who lose their temper and impulsively abuse rather than of inadequate protection services, reduced opportunities, and second class citizenry for women" (Gondolf & Russell, 1986:4). This may suggest that anger management represents less of a threat to the foundational gender imbalance within society and, of particular relevance to this thesis, allows proponents of this model to gain kudos, acceptance, and validity within some sections of the community. Sixth, anger management fails to consider normative reinforcements that sanction and replicate violence and abuse towards

69 My emphasis.
women. The concern in focusing on a man's anger is that the more unsettling tasks of challenging patriarchy, patrilineal descent, and male privilege are not confronted (Gondolf & Russell, 1986).

It is perhaps useful here to reflect on the tensions between instrumental violence and abuse, and violence that is driven by rage (James, Seddon & Brown, 2002). Through interviews with men who had used violence, James et al. (2002) observed a difference in the violence-descriptive language “…between men who saw their violence…as something they employed to get their own way, (and) men who experienced their violence in expressive terms, as outside of their control” (2002:4). James et al. (2002) suggested that this reflected diversity in the style of violence that was used, as well as the perpetrator’s conscious intentions. Men who employed instrumental violence used physical assault, stand-over tactics, verbal abuse and intimidation, and aggression to dominate and control their partners. In reporting on the men’s descriptions of their behaviours, James et al. (2002) found that “…there was a sense that these men knew what they were doing, and (that) they intended to frighten, intimidate and punish” (2002:4). This differed from the expressive violence of rage which occurred usually as a response to criticism or challenge, and which serves to get both distance and compliance from the man’s partner. I do not concur with this as, in different situations, men will behave differently.

Men who use instrumental violence appear more likely to minimise and deny their use of violence, particularly physical manifestations of that behaviour (Hearn, 1998). However, men who experienced their violence in expressive terms, while

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70 Despite this critique of anger management as a theoretical basis for intervention with men, I will argue in Chapter 6 that there is a place for this technique, but only (1) within the clearly defined parameters of articulating anger as emotion versus violence and abuse as chosen controlling behaviours, and (2) as an adjunct to criminal and legal interventions.
more likely to own their physical behaviours, were more likely to seek diminished responsibility through blaming their partners for ‘pushing their buttons’. James et al. (2002) made the point, however, that at the same time as expressive users of violence were of the opinion that their violence was not pre-meditated, it could “…not (be assumed) that their partners agreed with this view…(as it) may (also) appear a deliberate act of silencing” (2002:5). While these differences in men’s descriptions of their violence might be useful for facilitators and program providers in inviting them to accept responsibility, men encounter their ‘losing it’ from a position of power and domination. There is a very good argument here that, in fact, they choose this strategy knowing that it will achieve the desired outcome – control of, and over, their partners.71.

The behavioural model is broader than simply being about anger management. As Laing (2002:5) commented, “…programs incorporate cognitive behavioural interventions…based on social learning theory”. Behaviours are learnt through watching others in the social world; the family, peers, the media, the public sphere. The emphases of cognitive behavioural interventions were focused on exposing patterns of thought that were behind the replicating of abusive behaviours and supporting men to consider different ways of thinking and feeling that would result in alternative, more socially acceptable behaviours (Gondolf, 2002:10). This equates to sex role socialisation: that is, if men’s roles were differently scripted, then the violence and abuse would cease. While the majority of programs have woven varying interpretations of gender analyses with cognitive behaviour therapy, there are concerns that the use of behavioural interventions outside of a socio-political analysis of men’s violence is incomplete (Orme, Dominelli, & Mullender, 2000:92).

71 See also Donovan (1999) who has a more sophisticated perspective on the relationship between anger and violence.
Men’s violence, located in men’s oppression and dominance of women through patriarchy and privilege, becomes reframed as a product of male sex role socialisation, and more conducive to interpersonal therapy and the development of personal skills and techniques. Thus, it is problematic to consider men (and women) as tabula rasa upon which scripts of role expectation are written. The more authentic objectives and foci were being consumed, as Gondolf (2002: 10) suggested, “…in the more conventional treatment of the problem as a psychological rather than a social one”.

(iv) Systemic / interactional

Earlier couples’ and family therapy was often informed by the discourse of assumptions that work with the couple could occur within a political vacuum; that is, that the components, nature and socio / cultural context of relationship difficulties were regarded as irrelevant compared to the processing of schema of relating and systemic structure within the family. Personal and social injustices were renamed as interactional issues, thus diluting the influence of power, hierarchy and the political. Contributing variables such as gender, economic wealth, race, life experience, and personal values frameworks – of both the client and the therapist - were regarded as irrelevant (Bernal & Diamond, 1985). Jenkins (1994) articulated some of the reasons behind this thinking: that power is illusory, an epistemological error of linear thinking; therapists have no real power in relation to clients; therapists have a role to ameliorate personal distress and assist family members to solve their problems – not to be agents for social change (1994:12).

72 I will elaborate more on this point in Chapter 6.
Partnerships Against Domestic Violence\(^{73}\) (2002), a federal government initiative, while critiquing five different theoretical explanations for domestic violence\(^{74}\), identified its own theoretical position as located within interactive systems. PADV (2002:9) proposed “...an explanation and approach which can be described as “both / and”; (a position) that resists categorical dichotomies such as good / bad or victim / perpetrator”. Systemic perspectives of intervention focus on men's violence as a pattern of interpersonal communication and transaction between the man and his partner as a couple (Lipchik, Sirles & Kubicki, 1997). From this vantage point, violence and abuse is manifest due to the couple’s poor communication skills as opposed to the man’s desire and attempts to control and dominate his partner. Thus, violence is seen to be a mutually shared problem within the relationship. Eisikovits and Edleson (1989) pointed out that “…(t)he language that systems-oriented practitioners use often replaces 'victim' and 'abuser' labels with such terms as 'abusive or violent couples'”\(^{1989:388}\). Within the family systems framework, both men and women are seen as being equally responsible for abusive behaviours, and neither partner has the right to claim the term 'victim'. This being the case, as Webster (2006) reiterated, criminal responses to perpetrator’s behaviour are limited because perpetrators are also understood to be victims.

Missing the point completely, in my opinion, Biddulph (1994) suggested that “…huge efforts (need to be) made to build communication skills, assertiveness and the healing of the man’s own abused memories...(with an) aim...to bring men and women (sic) to a point where they can relate with respect” (1994:89). Similarly,

\(^{73}\) PADV ceased with a change of federal government that occurred in 2007. It was replaced by *Time for Action: The National Council’s plan for Australia to reduce violence against women and their children 2009-2021*.

\(^{74}\) They identified theories of biological determinism, individual pathology, sociological theories of stress and individual risk, and early feminist analyses that focused on the structural power held by men.
Geffner, Mantooth, Franks and Rao (1989) proposed that the goal for the therapeutic process is for each partner to identify their own contribution to the problem - the man's violence - and to take steps to ensure that the dynamics of the transaction become equitable. Shared responsibility for the man's behaviour is a cornerstone and, hence, responsibility for 'fixing' it is also a shared responsibility. Thus, violent and abusive behaviours were regarded as being symptomatic of disturbances and failures of the family structure and function.

Four decades ago, Laing and Esterson (1970) were critical of a systems framework, proposing that the danger of systemic conceptualisation and explanations was that individual responsibility for violence and abuse would be obscured. Systemic explanations for men's violence and abuse in the family have been robustly critiqued for several reasons. First, maintaining the safety of women as the sole priority would appear to be considerably difficult as the woman may be placed in a compromising and threatening position as the result of disclosures about the man and herself that are made in the counselling sessions (Eisikovits & Edleson, 1989). Second, responsibility for the man’s violence is shared by the couple and, that being the case, the woman is expected to change her behaviour as well as it seems that men become violent in response to women’s behaviour. Anecdotally many workers hear from men language such as ‘she pushed my buttons’ or ‘she wouldn't let up’ or ‘she kept nagging me’. The tacit understanding within a family systems explanation for men’s violence is that the man’s violence is an “…understandable response to what the man regards as ‘provocative’ behaviour” (Pease, 2002:154).

Third, many workers are concerned that the focus of family systems intervention is directed more at saving the relationship rather than stopping the violence and other
non-criminal behaviours of the perpetrator (Costello, 2006). Lipchik, Sirles and Kubicki (1997) suggested that the woman may be coerced to stay in the relationship through false promises of increased communication and greater respect while issues of power and control are dismissed or, perhaps at best, glossed over. Many men who may have poor communication skills or are highly stressed are not violent or abusive to their partners. Likewise, many men who are violent and abusive within the family environment appear to be more than capable of demonstrating ‘social and interpersonal skills’ within the public or professional sphere. Thus, systemic explanations do not provide a sufficiently adequate account of men’s violence towards their partners, and it might be the case that a reliance on this framework of pathologising behaviour - and the potential dangers that it represents - paints psychological intervention as more of a culprit rather than a cure (James & McIntyre, 1990).

(v) Feminist analysis

Proponents of profeminist behaviour change groupwork intervention claim to work from a socio / political understanding of men’s family violence – what is generally regarded as a feminist analysis. Those adopting this philosophical foundation of men’s violence in the family advocate that interventionist work with the man must address, as its core axiom, the social context of gendered inequality (Laing, 2002). Feminist analyses of men’s violence to women have argued that this violence is a manifestation of patriarchal structures that suppress and subordinate women. As Hayward (1999) suggested, “…the major cause of violence against women…is the unequal role and relationships between men and women” (1999:2). Thus, violence is the logical output of a power imbalance. Inherent to this foundation are the key

75 Because they are aware that the consequences could be dire. Thus, they have a choice.
76 I will explore in more detail in Chapter 6 how advocates of behaviour change group work identify, interpret and engage with an understanding of a ‘feminist analysis’ of men’s violence.
concepts of both gender and power: that is, that men as a social class have much greater power than women, and men’s violence towards women is the primary method through which they maintain their dominance.

Through a feminist lens, it is within the social context that men’s violence towards women can be more clearly named. Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh and Lewis (2000) suggested that

(m)en are violent to their women partners in a wider context of family, friends and the general cultural and institutional settings in which such behaviour and accompanying attitudes are more or less condemned or condoned. The messages and responses are often mixed and ambivalent, showing support for men’s authority over wives, boundaries of ‘appropriate’ behaviour for women in the role of wife, and more or less tolerance for the use of violence under certain circumstances. Sanctions for the use of violence are often weak or non-existent and men incur few if any costs for its use (2000:31).

Echoing the reflections of Hayward (1999) and Dobash et al. (2000) above, Alder (1990) proposed that a feminist analysis of men’s violence against women needs violent and abusive behaviour to be seen as “…an expression of male power which is used by men to reproduce and maintain their relative status and authority over women” (1990:8). Men’s desire for power and control is central here to an understanding of violent men, as it seems that many men believe “…that violence is a legitimate form of punishment in the exercise of that authority” (McGregor and Hopkins, 1991:121). Websdale and Chesney-Lind (1998) suggested that there is a strong correlation between the presence of patriarchal rule within the family and the levels of violence experienced there by women. While patriarchy has male rule ‘power-over-another’ privilege as its foundation, power does not have to result in overt conflict but can be, and is, exercised covertly through the withholding of decision making, knowledge, affection, and finance etc from others, and ensuring
that the space, time and choice to raise challenges to the status quo is never granted (Stacey and Price, 1981; Stark, 2007). Kurz (1989) proposed that at the root of a man’s violence is his desire to make his partner conform and comply with his wishes, to punish her for doing something the man does not approve, or to control her actions and behaviour. What is at stake here is that the man is choosing to use violent and abusive behaviour to defend and enforce patriarchal privilege: a choice that is, as Pease (2002) suggested, “…viewed in terms of its usefulness rather than its psychological causes” (2002:155), and grounded within patriarchal control and privilege.

Some male writers have located men’s behaviour towards women in the broader construction of gender inequality and its enforcement. For example, Connell (1995) pointed out that dominant constructions of masculine traits allow many men to justify their behaviour towards women as they believe that they have the right to control and dominate women, and that it is a man’s place to be in charge. A violent man’s belief system includes that it is acceptable for a man to be violent in order to get what he wants through the control of his partner. A feminist framework proposes that these beliefs are learned within the socio-cultural surrounds of male domination over women, and are further reinforced, sanctioned, justified and exercised by dominant factors within that society. Adams (1985) suggested that for this method of intervention to be successful, these beliefs must be challenged. Unless the man’s foundation of gender relations is changed, he will continue to impose his own perspectives on those to whom he can exercise power over. Cross-cultural findings by Kimmel (2000) demonstrated that gender inequality is the

77 Connell has since transgendered.
strongest correlating single contributing factor to men’s violence against women as “…the less gender differentiation (that exists) between women and men, the less likely (there) will be gendered violence” (2000:245).

Feminist analyses name such components as patriarchy and male privilege as structural frameworks upon which men’s violence is founded. Patriarchy refers to the manifestation and the institutionalisation of male domination over women and children within the family, and the extension of that domination over women in society and culture in general (Lerner, 1986; hooks, 2004). The ideology of male supremacy, superiority and the beliefs that support and sustain it appear to form the collective of male privilege; a position - like most privileges - that operates as taken-for-granted. The claimed focus of MBCPs that operate from a feminist analysis or a profeminist foundation is to challenge and confront men about their socio / cultural beliefs of their perceived right to dominate women, the role of men’s power in gender relations, and the construction and maintenance of oppressive sex-gender systems. This is not easy for most men, as it requires a critique of that which is presumed, the taken-for-granted, and the unchallenged. This demands of men an understanding of their choice of violence and domination as a means of both ascertaining and maintaining their control over their partners and, as Adams (1988) suggested, challenging men to examine the socio / cultural contexts in which they make the choices to use violence and abuse against their partners.

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78 My emphasis.
79 I have found this to be useful terminology from the anthropological writings of Rubin (1978). It refers to the institutionalised structural systems which apportion privilege, property and resources to men and women according to culturally defined gender roles and expectations.
It is worth considering here that to focus narrowly on physical violence is to ignore the many and varied forms of power and control implications that are inherent in physical violence and abuse. Language is important here as limited definitions, as Hatty (1991) argued, have tended to give a place of salience to physical violence over other forms of men’s violence and abuse. This is somewhat problematic as, through limiting violence to physical manifestations of behaviour, interventions with men are aimed at their abuse of authority in the family, and not the ethos of this authority per se. Walker (1990) pointed out that ignoring male privilege, for example, leaves the structure of the family free from scrutiny about gender inequality as, she proposed, “…what is being modified is not men’s authority in the family but the abuse of it” (1990:110). Ironically, the Victorian peak body NTV appeared to exemplify Walker’s concerns when it stated that “…family violence is largely about the misuse\(^\text{80}\) of power and control” (V-NET, 1995:1.5.1).

While considerable changes in working with men who perpetrate violence and abuse in the family have taken place over the last thirty years (Day et al., 2009), there still remain concerns that reach beyond the specific issues of any particular model of intervention. McGregor (1990) proposed that “…until (women) are in a position of social and economic equality in relation to men, (then) there will always be violent oppression (of women)” (1990:14). The question that must be asked of behaviour change violence intervention with men is to what extent these programs contribute to the process of social and cultural change at the structural level (Pease, 2002), as to address men’s violence effectively there needs to be change in the patriarchal structures that reinforce and support violence. Thus, as Warters (1992) suggested,

\(^{80}\) My emphasis.
feminist analyses that emphasise change in social relations are a basic precondition for change at the individual level of men’s violence against women.

**Critiques of a feminist analysis**

As this research is founded upon a feminist analysis of men’s violence and abuse, it is pertinent to consider critiques of this position. There has been a growing body of researchers and practitioners prepared to argue in varying degrees of opposition to the feminist analysis of the influence and impact of patriarchy on men’s violence against women. Watson (2001) explored limitations and possible repercussions of the dominant discourse of ‘domestic violence’ as essentially a formulation of patriarchy. While acknowledging correlations between patriarchal ideologies and belief systems (Watson, 1996), he enquired as to “…the hidden effects of the continuing view of patriarchy as the sole explanation of domestic violence” (Watson, 2001:91). For example, in support of a universal risk theory of domestic violence (Devery, 1992), the dominant discourse of domestic violence has been constructed as male violence against women (National Committee on Violence Against Women, 1992). Watson (2001:91) argued that this has the potential for “…skewing the beliefs of workers in the field”. The only avenue open to a pathway of safety is for the woman to leave the man; thus, many agencies and workers espousing this political position have advocated relationship separation (NCP, 1999). To my mind, this perspective is too narrow and does not give women enough recognition or credit of being able to make their own decisions about (i) what to do vis-a-vis the current situation, and (ii) what sort of relationship they will live in. This position would also appear to be contrary to the stated views of many women in these situations; that they want their relationship to continue, but the violence and

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81 His emphasis.
abuse to cease (Goldner, 1998; VicHealth, 2006). As I will discuss in greater detail in chapter 6, interpretations of what ‘safety’ means have changed over the years, as it seems that the focus is now on women’s empowerment to make their own choices.

Wileman (2000) suggested that the isolation of patriarchy, favouring as it does a linear one-dimensional advocating of power, is not helpful to women who take the above-stated position of wanting the relationship to continue but the behaviour to cease. She argued that such a view undermines the personal power of women, as well as their capacity and ability to have some influence on the power imbalance within the relationship. Goldner (1999), in sympathy with this perspective, suggested that the complexities of the lived experience are smothered under the dominant discourse. However, this perspective would seem somewhat problematic as, while no relationship happens in a vacuum, there are individual components of behaviour that require (demand?) ownership and responsibility of the individual concerned.

Within the dominant discourses of domestic violence, variables such as class, low socio-economic status and substance abuse continue to be strongly correlated with violence, but are dismissed by many critics as excusing, justifying or minimising the man’s behaviour (V-Net, 1995; Pease, 2004). Clearly, correlation does not equate with causation and, increasingly, scholarship has attempted to articulate the intersection of gender with socio-economic status, class and ethnicity (Bograd, 2000).

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82 In recent years there has been an increase in critiques of feminist approaches by groups such as Australian Men’s Health and 1 in 3 (www.oneinthree.com.au) who argue for recognition of greater symmetry in violence acts. Further, more ecologically grounded models such as VicHealth, for example, critique feminist approaches as only emphasising gender as one dimension of the problem.

83 I take this view in my therapeutic interaction with couples seeking relationship counselling. There are at least three primary components: the woman’s framework, the man’s framework, and the interaction. To my mind, each is individually and solely responsible foremost for their own contribution. The interaction comes second.
It is clear that women from low socio-economic backgrounds are considerably more likely to experience physical violence delivered at the hands of their male partners (McKendy, 1997; hooks, 2004). The standings of social class, culture, ethnicity and substance abuse are significant magnitudes of women’s potential vulnerability to physical violence at the hands of their male partners (Marin & Russo, 1999). However, in challenging the violences of marginalised men it is important, as Cheng (1999) pointed out, to grasp the manner in which masculinities are impacted upon by variables of class, ethnicity and race. Again though, while the distinction between correlation and causality needs to be clearly acknowledged, as I will argue in greater depth in chapter 7, it is problematic not to consider the influences that these factors have on men’s choices of behaviour.

As previously mentioned, more than fifteen years ago the Office of the Status of Women (1995) pointed out that one in five Australians believed that violence from a husband to his wife was acceptable in some circumstances. More recent research (VicHealth, 2009:8) found, concerningly, that nearly one in four Australians expressed similar beliefs excusing violence. Kurz (1989) noted that the belief systems of many men justify their use of violence against their wives according to what they perceive as ‘acceptable norms of behaviour’. Goldner (2001) argued that “…the singular category of…patriarchy simply cannot account for all the variation…in…domestic violence” (2001:96) as only a small percentage of men use violence against their partners. Echoing this questioning, Russell and Jory (1997) enquired as to why “…attributing men’s abuse of women to the patriarchal structure

84 Goldner is referring to criminal acts.
of society fails to account for why only some men batter their partners” (1997:126).

However, as Hanmer (1978) stated

the fact that many husbands do not beat their wives, and many men do not attack women on the streets…is not proof that wife-beating and other assaults are irregular, unsystematic practices…but merely that it is not necessary to do so in order to maintain the privileges of the superior group (1978:229).

Similarly, Mederos (1987) suggested that claims are made upon women by all men. Where men differ in this dynamic is in the claims that they make, and how those claims are enforced. Sexist ideologies equip men with the capacity to justify their behaviours, and to eclipse their own self-interest in acting out violence. As Pease (2002) suggested, “…(i)n order for a man to be violent, his belief system must include a belief in violence as a legitimate way of solving problems and a belief that it is acceptable for men to control women” (2002:155). While acknowledging the influence of aforementioned other variables, the position that I take through this research is that patriarchy - and an assumption of male privilege - are the foundations upon which these beliefs are founded.

**Conclusion**

To discursively analyse and politically oppose men's violence in the family means considering contextual definitions and explanations of violence. This chapter has considered how men's violent and abusive behaviours come to be defined and named. As pointed out, these varying definitions of violence are contested and no one theory fully explains everything. Violence, as constructed through the social, through culture and through history, can have many different meanings to different actions, agencies, and social relations. These constructions of violence have affected how various interventionist agencies such as direct worker response, the criminal justice system, the police, and the state, both define and respond to violence. In turn,
these constructions have the capacity to influence actual and potential policies on violence which structures the interpretation of violence through both the inclusion or exclusion of any possible responses.

This chapter also discussed differing theoretical explanations of men’s violence in the family and how these have manifest in varying approaches to intervention. Many different theoretical foundations have been proposed to explain these behaviours. These have ranged from a biological-based model which explains men’s behaviour as naturally aggressive, innate and hard-wired; a psychological model which attributes men’s violence as resulting from their feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem and childhood developmental problems; behavioural / anger management explanations which propose that violence is a learned response that can be unlearned through the recognition and control of anger; interactional explanations based upon a mutually shared communication and dialogue problem; and a feminist-influenced socio / political critique of patriarchy and structural imbalance.

There are numerous responses to the influence of gender. Various definitions and analyses of violence ignore its influence, while others downplay it or simply see it as one factor among many. Overwhelming research continues to show that men are vastly over-represented in any statistical representation of violence. Men commit more acts of assault, more incidents of homicide than women. Men make up far larger numbers in prisons and other carceral settings than women. The majority of gun ownership is in the hands of men. Men are responsible for the vast majority of violence reported to police. It is important that the influences of gender, and the structural foundations of male privilege, patrilineal descent, and patriarchy that are built around it, are given due salience and are foundational in any intervention. To
not do so would be, at best, problematic, and at worst, an act of folly, danger and a compromise to safety. It is not that facilitators might ignore gender: the point is more how they use it and, in the process, that it becomes deradicalised. And this is political work. I will address this in more depth in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction
Initially this chapter considers both the qualitative methods that were used to gather data for analysis, as well as data analysis. In an endeavour to provide a more wide-ranging engagement with the issues data was sourced from a variety of offerings that included review and analysis of the literature, semi-structured interviews, and analyses of agency-sponsored advertising material. Second, this chapter considers, amongst other reflections, the reflexive social position of myself as researcher and social agent when using poststructuralist, feminist interpretations of discourse analysis as a research methodology. This emphasises the enmeshment of the researcher’s subjective self in the research. Finally, this chapter concludes by considering the ethical issues and potential sites of conflicts of interest that are inherent within the reality that, as the researcher, I am inextricably interwoven throughout the very frameworks and discourses that are being critiqued.
Methodology and design

This research is not, in the traditional sense, a pure empirical engagement with the subject matter in that it does not foreground interview material. Rather, it is more theoretical in design and expression, and has been augmented with empirical / ethnographical input. Textual analysis contributes the majority of the directional and theoretical framework of this research. However, frequently feminist-influenced research tends to favour and employ qualitative research methods which present a more robust and detailed analysis of the subjective experience of thoughts and ideas (D’Cruz & Jones, 2004; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). The textual analysis in this research is linked to empirical data gathered from one-to-one interviews with key sector actors such as program managers and group facilitators of this means of intervention, and to the advertising of these programs in the public sphere by these same actors and their agencies.

The research questions identified in chapter one were grounded in the assumption that both material practices and the language from which it emanates exist within a dialectic relationship, as each is informed and molded by the other. These questions provide a foundation of analytical focus that is concerned with identifying and mapping contestation and contradiction both within and between various discourses as they are experienced by all involved actors. Multiple levels of analysis promotes in greater depth the investigation of power relations and ideological contestation; while also questioning how policy statements mold and are molded by the socio / cultural context within which the interventions exist.

The question as to how to approach possible interviewees was based around rather simple criteria. At the time of writing in the state of Victoria there were 36
behaviour change programs under the NTV umbrella that offer MBCP interventionist groups to predominantly self-referred and mandated male clients. I used my knowledge of the sector to attempt to identify an appropriate sample. The initial criterion that I used in this selection was that a participant was either a facilitator of a MBCP, or the manager of such a program. As I mentioned in Appendix 2, all managers interviewed were also hands-on facilitators of programs. There was a need to be both practical and pragmatic in approaching sector colleagues to request interview-style conversations that involved – and critiqued - their program’s intervention. These colleagues were approached directly by telephone in 60% of cases, with the remaining personal contacted through email correspondence and direct invitation. I knew all but two of these participants, and had been previously employed by two colleagues to facilitate their MBCP. Interviewees were sent an outline and summary of the research ambitions to inform their consent (or otherwise), and to direct their focus upon the issues to be questioned and critiqued. One colleague was not interested in the process, suggesting that she didn’t see how it would contribute to anything useful.

Gender was not a factor in selection of interview participants; my only focus being to access colleagues – male and / or female - for their opinions. I don’t believe that this was purposive selection as I did not seek to skew the data by only interviewing those that I knew could be relied on for a controversial comment. Having been in the sector for more than fifteen years I am aware of the politics and locations of fellow players; and where they sit along a political continuum. I was not after comments that would simply provide ‘grist to the mill’ to substantiate any argument I might put

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85 NTV Annual Report 2011:22
86 The three main reasons for considering this geographical dissection were time, travel, and ease of access to interviewees; particularly given their busy workloads.
87 See Appendix 2 regarding interview make-up, recruitment, participant profile, etc.
88 There is no consideration within this research of the gendered nature of the interview material.
forward. I sought to understand the focus, structure, individual differences, subtleties and nuances of programs as interpreted by these actors. Royse, Thyer, Padgett & Logan (2006) suggested that sampling methods depend largely on the data required, and from where stems the most reliable means of access to source that information. Interviews (N=10) were conducted individually, and, as previously stated, were semi-structured in order to allow the participants space to explore the ensuing ambiguity that was raised during the interview\textsuperscript{89}. This allowed a degree of flexibility for the participant rather than assuming that they were required to respond according to a fixed or finite position\textsuperscript{90} around various themes. This is similar to what Burgess (1984) outlined referring to the idea that “…few field researchers have followed the structural approach, preferring to use an informal or unstructured style of interviewing which employs a set of themes to form questions in the course of the conversation” (1984:102).

Burgess’s (1984) framework was the position that I took through this inquiry. Further, this research is exploratory in nature, and although there were areas of particular interest that could perhaps have been explored through questionnaires, questionnaires are unable to probe or challenge the participants, whereas interviews offer a more robust opportunity to engage in a dialogue. While questionnaires can be, and often are, used in conjunction with interviews, what was most important to me was the ‘point of entry’, and interviews allow researchers to access individuals’ understanding of their social world (Smith 2005). The use of interviews also acknowledges that participants are the experts of their own experiences; thus, the interview process had the potential to generate greater in-depth information about

\textsuperscript{89} In the simple coding system used, the first letter, M/F, refers to male / female, and the second letter refers to their role as either a manager or a facilitator of a MBCP.

\textsuperscript{90} While acknowledging that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate bias, participants would not be simply delivering answers that they felt were expected of them.
individual experiences. Unstructured interviews, or a ‘friendly chat’ would not have provided the frameworks that I felt were needed, and I concur with Mason (2002) who proposed that it is not possible to gather data in a wholly unstructured way through a qualitative interview, because the decisions and judgements the researcher makes give some form of structure and purpose to the data generation process (2002:69).

The foundation of this methodological position emphasised that knowledge is both contextual and situational, and that data is co-constructed by the researcher and the participant, and not excavated or collected. I developed a more dialogical-focused approach to these interviews, prepared as I was to discuss with participants my own analysis of the questions and issues as they developed during the research process. This overtly dialogical method of interviewing can be open to criticism in regards to ‘leading’ participants, and encouraging them to say what they think they are required to respond. However, this method can also have a democratising effect on the balance of power. The researcher becomes more visible rather than remaining the powerful ‘hidden editor’ who selects and makes decision throughout the interview and research process. In a sector that preaches transparency it would have been remiss of me - not to mention ironic - if I was not prepared to walk the talk.

Data was generated to capture ‘coalface engagement’ and to highlight the complexities, confusions and contradictions of what are socially constructed practices. Reliability is an important component of this in producing qualitative studies. Seale (1999) identified five strategies to assist reliability: multiple researchers, peer examination, low inference descriptors, participant researchers, and mechanically recorded data. This was solo research which precluded both multiple researchers and participant researchers. Peer examination was attempted to be
addressed by asking two female feminist activists, not associated with this research, to review the data and process. Data was mechanically recorded and low inference descriptors – for example pauses – were included to avoid the ambiguity that ‘tidied up’ transcribed speech can often create. While the number of participants was relatively small, interviews lasted, on average, one hour each and I collected close to twelve hours of taped data, and over 160 pages of transcription.

Recorded and transcribed interviews were scrutinized for recurring themes, trends or relationships to be revealed\(^\text{91}\). Given the very political nature of this work and the passion that frequently drives it, there was an assumption that strongly held beliefs of considerable diversity would be expressed\(^\text{92}\). Thematic analysis was used to separate the data, and then to compare and contrast the interviewee responses, and to identify both similarities and contradictions within the data. Following Monette (2002), narrative frameworks were utilised in the documentation of the analysed data in an effort to ensure that the participant’s voices were represented and present through the research. Specific themes, such as use of language, the focus and ambition of the program, curriculum content, for example, were reflected in the participant’s responses. While the rationale for selecting a particular quote from the interview data was based on excerpts that reinforced and / or summarised identified themes from the textual analysis, I was also cognisant of diversity and dissent from the ‘party line’.

I was also looking for what DeVault (1999) referred to as ‘linguistic incongruence’. She described this as experience which is unarticulated; that is, the way in which

\(^{91}\) I did not use a computer-generated data analysis package as I was not familiar with this software. If I was to repeat the process I would carefully re-consider my ignorance.

\(^{92}\) As indeed they were. Such examples were the need for recognised standards of practice for this method of intervention and addressing structural change. These points will be discussed in greater detail in Part 2.
people manage incongruence in everyday speech, and then translate this experience with the language they are familiar with, incorporating the expectation that the hearer will understand what they are trying to get across. Of particular importance also was what was not said by interview participants, or what I was expected to understand without it being explicitly articulated; perhaps by a raised eyebrow or subtle shrug. It is also pertinent to question my relationship with the interview participants, women and men with whom I have been in varying degrees of professional relationships prior to this research. Do I belong to the same cohort as an equal peer? Is my position ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ for the purpose of this study? Widerberg (2008:12) argues that researchers can expect to occupy a number of positions: “insider/outsider/both/neither”. Whilst in some way the researcher is always inside in some sense due to immersion in a socially constructed world, whatever position is occupied, this knowledge is always partial as it is situated, known and gleaned from ‘within’

Despite being ‘within’ the cohort, both myself and the interview participants were very aware that the MBCP sector is a relatively small community, and during the interview process some clearly censored and limited what they were prepared to publically state. For example, while some participants would critique the ethos underpinning other programs – and their own agencies, they would say no more than this. Others would reinforce their criticisms with body language, or facial gestures that are difficult to capture in an interview transcript. Although participants spoke ‘off the record’, I have no way of knowing to what extent their answers were self-censored in the interview process. In addition to this, there is, as previously mentioned, always the problem of ‘socially desirable’ answers. Although

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93 See Franklin (1997) for a considered reflection on narrative interviewing and validity.
participants were assured that everything they said would remain anonymous, sensitive questions were asked. There is no reason for me to disbelieve any of the participants’ accounts, but the extent to which participants answered in socially desirable ways is always difficult to gauge: and there would be consequences for overstepping boundaries.

Another limitation that related to the smallness of the community was how to get a point across without revealing participant’s identities. This limitation constitutes a problematic dilemma. As the researcher, I am aware of important connections to other organisations, to participants’ professional standing, to funding and to kudos, but have to find ways of analysing these connections without placing any participant at potential risk.

The methodological framework for this research is informed by critical discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1993) that explores how behaviour change groupwork intervention has been shaped by articulated interests from different social agents. These players align themselves through different vocabularies and locate proposed interventions within a framework of the rhetoric of feminist sympathies and professionalism. This focus reflects that discourse is not merely a descriptive tool, but is formative of social identities from which particular strategies and courses of action follow (Chambon and Bellamy, 1995). Through differential use of language professional purpose is structured, as is the role of the facilitator / manager, and the
status of the client\textsuperscript{94} (Francis & Tsang, 1997). Literature that was made publically available to advertise programs (N=4) also informed this research\textsuperscript{95}.

A particular component of interest in this research has involved the appropriateness and validity of critical discourse analysis as a means of contributing to potential social change and challenges to the status quo of violence intervention. In conjunction with critical discourse analysis, I have applied a theoretical framework that has been informed by a poststructural feminist analysis. I have also been influenced by what Fairclough (1992:24) described as “moments of crisis”, where discourses are challenged and various tensions surface in relation to the subjectivities of the status quo. As I previously put forward in chapter one, the research questions have been formulated to explore interwoven themes of how discourses of men’s violence in the family are produced and interpreted, appropriated and / or resisted by different actors and agencies in the sector. This requires reflecting upon how agents engage with the axioms, the taken-for-granted truths, as they attempt to establish jurisdiction over their expression of authenticity within the sector. Inherent within this is the constructing of subject identities and claims to scientific knowledge and expertise, ethical standards of professional practice, while having to meet the required practice standards of the peak body, NTV.

In taking these lines of questioning, there was an assumption that sector-specific language and practice exist in a dialectic relationship, with each influencing and

\textsuperscript{94} It is pertinent to consider just who is ‘the client’. Given that the espoused ambition is the safety of women and children, it would seem prudent to consider this cohort as the real client of the service and of the intervention.

\textsuperscript{95} The decision to critique this literature came as a consequence of walking through the office of the peak body NTV and spotting these 4 brochures upon a table. I pondered as to how the message communicated through the literature might also withstand the lens of critique that this research offered.
contributing to the other. How language acts as a creative and controlling influence, how subjects’ political positions are constructed, contested and resisted by the different actors and agencies were also themes under questioning that was both exploratory and explanatory. The order of discourse and interpreted text production was mapped, tracing contestation and contradiction both between and within discourses as they were experienced by actors and agencies. The explanatory focus rests on power as it was manifested through language, recognising that discourse analysis implies a theoretical commitment to analysing power and dominance between actors and agencies that have differentiated access to, and control over, discourse practices.

Data and analysis

This research has made use of several methods to gather data for analysis. These included

- A textual review and analysis of literature;
- Semi-structured interviews with agency practitioners within the sector;
- An analysis of advertising material that is available to the public.

Incorporating multiple sources of evidence and engagement encourages the development of converging lines of enquiry and provides for a richer analysis of the discourse and actors’ weaving within it (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). Meaning is produced through the interpretation of texts and ‘hard copy’, and are thus open to diverse readings which could differ in what Fairclough identified as “ideological import” (1992:36). Ideological processes are interactive dynamics between actors, not only the relationship between discourses. Thus, incorporating semi-structured interviews allows for an interpretive account of the varying discursive practices that are involved in both the production of texts and the interpretation of texts. I used this
framework, and incorporated publically available advertising material, in an endeavour to overcome the limitations of discourse analysis that solely relies on a critique of extant literature that, on its own, says little about the social relations that construct texts; and, just as importantly, how those texts are interpreted by their specific audience. It is difficult for me, as both a researcher and a therapist, to postulate an adequate elucidation of discourse and social change without incorporating the narratives of those who construct, interpret and mediate the discursive field. I will consider further in this chapter ethical issues regarding the potential for data to be used and manipulated. In the short term, with regards to responsible interpretation, it is important that the researcher and the reader are in no doubt that, as Fairclough (1995:232) reflected, “…critical analysis can be turned and appropriated by (the) dominant social forces”.

Analysing qualitative data raises issues and questions concerning the validity, reliability and generalisability of the interpretation. Validity informs the researcher whether or not the meaning of the construct that is being researched has been captured by the indicator: which reliability then tests for consistency and dependability. Trinder (2000:54) suggested that while research that is located within a poststructural framework may not incorporate the comfort of agreed criteria, this does not mean that anything and everything is “...up for grabs”.

The essence of validity – used primarily in conventional science - is that it is a judgement concerning the effectiveness of the outcomes of the analysing methods. Scheurich (1997) enquired as to what it was “…about validity that exceeded its paradigmatic birthplace? What...(compelled)...the epistemological travellers of the post-positivist diaspora to not leave home without it” (1997:81). It is possible to
reconstruct these concepts in frameworks that synchronise with a critical epistemology. Within a constructionist paradigm, Guba and Lincoln (1998) proposed reconceptualising concepts of external and internal validity as credibility and fairness. That is, as looked at through the lens of the proactively involved individual: credibility as a level of trustworthiness, and fairness as representative of an appropriate level of authenticity. However, Scheurich (1997) suggested that validity is multi-faceted and dynamic in its ‘truth’. Ongoing interactions between the researcher and the researched (the ‘other’) can be reconceptualised as long as there is no (conscious) intention to dominate and conquer the other. For the purpose of this research, it might mean acknowledging that there are competing paradigms and differences in determining how to analyse data with ‘validity’: and then just getting on with it!

It was my belief that using multiple methods of data collection could potentially add increased levels of credibility to the analysis in validating the voices of the researched. It will be up to the reader to decide if that is indeed the case! However, Maykut and Morehouse (1994) suggested that it is a combination of interviews, along with reviews of relevant documents (that) increases the likelihood that the phenomenon of interest is being understood from various points of view and ways of knowing. Convergence of a major theme or pattern in the data from interviews and documents lends strong credibility to the findings (1994:146).

It is worth keeping salient that researcher intervention is, to some extent, potentially minimised using pre-existing documentation as these public documents were produced for a purpose other than this research96. The primary role of the critical researcher is to develop resources and tools to achieve the desired engagement. Judgements about transformations are better left to those who will be most affected

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96 These sources have also been included in the text so as to allow the reader the opportunity of critiquing my analysis of them.
the inquiry participants; that is, those under the gaze of critique. Fairclough (1995) concurred, proposing that the role of critical discourse analysis does not need to “...go beyond providing a resource for people to use in their own decisions – it must scrupulously avoid setting out blueprints for emancipatory practice” (1995:211).

I do not claim any truth in validity and its relationship with the methodology used in this research, and I reflect upon that point and the construction of ‘truth’ as an object of discourse analysis in the next section. Hopefully, the analysis produces more relevant, complex and faithful insights than might have been achieved through other means. Here I am in sympathy with Lather (1993), who suggested that this de-centres validity as an epistemological guarantee and reconstructs it as multiple and continuously dynamic. Accordingly, the results and / or findings of this research can only ever be recognised as contingent and incomplete, a part of an on-going engagement and dialogue with the contentious issue of trying to address the cause rather than the symptom. It offers reflections and engagement rather than any answers, "...forming neither a composite work nor an exemplary text" (Foucault, 1975: x).

A reflexive lens

The professional interventions that I am critiquing in this research, and the purpose behind men’s abusive and violent behaviours, share the common foundation of power and control. As I referred to in chapter one, Jenkins (1994:19) commented on an “...awareness of the dominance of issues of hierarchy and competition” from sector practitioners, suggesting that “(w)ork with violence and abuse has been especially redolent with issues of ownership, jockeying for power, and competitive
debates”. This thesis is titled “Staking a Claim” for a reason, and the title refers to all those with a vested interest in positioning themselves within the men’s family violence sector. I do not exclude myself from this. Thus, it would seem both useful and responsible to consider the reflexive challenges to my own constructions of truth and power through exposing my own discursively formed views, and considering how my own subjective experiences and personal constructions interacted with this research.

As a researcher, as one of the researched, or as a reader, individual meanings and interpretations are created, mediated and maintained by considerable variables in the socio/cultural milieu of life. Categories exist in a matrix of difference where, poststructurally viewed, there are no shared essential characteristics or experiences from which interpretations and thematic schema can be naturally conceived. As a researcher in this process, all I can refer to in terms of locating history and experiences is, as Dunlap (1997) suggested, an individual elucidation of the discourses and “…the assumptions, values and the worldview as they are embodied in communal practice” (1997:48). Therefore, to my mind, these experiences must form part of the analysis, and must be acknowledged.

Men’s stopping violence work is all about power. While as a researcher I am immersed in truth and validity claims, I continue to perpetuate, postulate and participate in reinforcing, replicating and resisting or rebelling against various discourses that do or do not meet my needs in the short term. Given that this can be subtle, overt or covert, it would seem ethical to critique my own discursive formations to, if not at least to minimise, then to expose their potential to influence, contradict and corrupt. While there sometimes appears to be ambivalence towards
first person reflexivity\textsuperscript{97}, it would seem pertinent to attempt to understand the context of the self before imposing upon the ‘realities’ of others. Rather than trying to skirt around the issue of researcher subjectivity – particularly in the arena of violence / abuse, power and control – it would make more sense and be more integrally founded to consider, as Walkerdine (1997) suggested, that as “…it is an impossible task to…(make) futile attempts to avoid something which cannot be avoided, we should think more carefully about how to utilise our subjectivity as a feature of the research process” (1997:59).

As I broached in chapter two, a feminist-founded epistemology seeks to confront and challenge the objectivism and interpretations that are conceptualised through the use of a biased and sexist language (Harding, 1990), and contributes to a more complete appreciation of subjective experience. As Patton (2001) suggested, it makes for a much more practical and pragmatic solution to consider avoiding altogether any “…futile debate (concerning) subjectivity versus objectivity…(because no) credible research strategy advocates biased distortion of data to serve the researcher’s (own) vested interests and prejudices” (2001:51). Because I cannot avoid it - as I outline further in the next section - I have advocated for the use of more productively reflexive, accountable and transparent subjectivity. As power is layered within the discourses in the narrative of textual production, historical processes potentially deprive the research process of creativity in understanding and making sense of experiences and existence. As activities experienced within the socio / cultural environment “…both enable and limit what we can know, (d)istinctive kinds of thinking have distinctive material conditions” (Harding, 2003: xv).

\textsuperscript{97} See, for example, Moores (1993) or Probyn (1994).
Harding (1987) suggested that the ability, capacity and commitment to contribute to feminist research are not biologically determined traits. If women are not the sole contributors to feminist theories and knowledge, men are obligated to contribute and, in doing so, they must assume responsibility for the standpoint from which they are speaking. This promotes "...ambivalence and multiplicity" (Lather, 1991:82), requires an active engagement in the struggle of change in both the private and the public arenas, and through ownership of voice and subjectivity and the “...use of all of one’s capacities through personal experience and engagement” (Patton, 2001:66) may more likely uncover findings that elucidate greater integrity, meaning and possibility.

**Considering ethical issues**

It is worth considering at this point the position of ethical influences on myself as the researcher in this qualitative research analysis. Bryman (1988) suggested that one of the most fundamental characteristics of qualitative research is the focus on interpreting events, actions, values and norms from the position of those being researched, as well as incorporating the researcher into the process. Maykut and Morehouse (1994:14) located the position of the researcher in suggesting that s/he “...understands that they are also subjects or actors and (are) not outside of the process as impartial observers”. As Luke (1998) pointed out, this position synchronises with the question of self-reflexivity in critical discourse analysis which demands holding the researcher’s own use of discourse as primarily problematic in the design and inquiry. That is, there is no escaping from the reality that I am considerably interwoven into the very discourses that I am seeking to analyse. I suggest, however, that there must be a balance between having research that positions the researcher as an objective, and non-influential and silent observer on
one hand and, on the other presenting an “...author saturated text” (Moore, 1997:12).

I would like to think that I have placed some distance between my gendered position of power and privilege, and critically analysed the discourses, narratives, and experiences that accompany MBCPs as a claimed authentic means of intervention. This would establish whether it engages with their best interests. However, this is not to suggest or imply that women must accept responsibility or set the agenda for research that is undertaken by men. Morton (1997) raised the concern that this position, as a condition of research, can possibly be viewed as men handing over moral authority to women, a position that he said "...comes perilously close to handing over responsibility also" (1997:25). Clearly, men must accept responsibility for the plethora of questions that emerge from a critical discourse of masculinity.

There are several ethical issues and possible points of conflict of interest that arise for me at the personal level of engagement with this whole sector. One of my many professional roles has been facilitating voluntary MBCPs – the very programs that I am critiquing – for more than a dozen years. My interest and connections with this method of intervention are considerable. It is necessary for me to table potential conflicts of interest as part of transparency of this research and of the sector as a whole. First, let me state unambiguously that my starting point through this research journey was and remains my belief that accountable interventions with men have the potential to be a valuable and useful tool in the ongoing engagement with men’s family violence. I see them as a component of a broader range of interventions that encompasses women’s services, the criminal and legal systems, and the state. A

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98 Connell (1995:128-39) gave a good account of some of the problems that profeminist men face with regard to responsibility. See also Law (1994:40-3).
transparent and accountable MBCP, linked in and integrated with women’s support services and a responsive judicial service has, in my opinion, the potential to be a legitimate interventionist component in challenging men’s violence and abuse that occurs in the family. Nonetheless, I consider that the way that programs are sold to a new audience is at best ambitious and, at worst, potentially dangerous. The lapping of the research lens has honed my critique in areas that are still contentious – evaluation of success, therapy / socio-cognitive education, agents marking their scent and establishing authority in a sector that challenges power and control – and, in wearing other hats within the broad welfare sector, I take pains to point out that MBCPs are not a drop-in panacea to ‘stopping’ men’s violence and abuse in the family. And I believe that they must be approached with caution in that regard.

Second, I have a financial interest in the ongoing place of MBCPs. For example, while currently working one evening per week as a sessional co-facilitator under the supervision of a well-known provider of counselling services\(^99\), I gross approximately $6000 per annum in income through this work. Thus, it would be foolish and somewhat unethical of me not to declare that there could be a danger that my mortgage repayments and lifestyle choices may sway my intellectual rigor and interest, curiosity and political position on MBCPs. Perhaps this is an issue that the sector as a whole needs to deal with as there would be similar tensions experienced across the board by colleagues and agency hierarchies.

Third, many of those I interviewed are colleagues whom I respect and, in some cases, with whom I share a close friendship. Some of these people have contributed to my training in this sector over many years, several have been mentors, and I still

\(^99\) I will argue in greater depth as to the tension inherent in using therapeutic language in chapter 6.
receive training and occasionally professional supervision from others. I do, however, have a desire to critique and engage with the issues as seen through the particular theoretical lenses that this thesis incorporates. While those interviewed were generous in giving me their time and wisdom most expressed a strong desire that the interviews were conducted in confidence. This field is awash with politics, posturing, positioning and tendering for frequently (very) scarce funding. Opinions expressed may not have been to-the-letter agency policy, and in the general climate workers prefer to be somewhat guarded and keep their cards relatively close to their chests. I believed that our conversations were able to take place with integrity, openness and challenge as there is an assumption that all are interested in the same outcome with regards to men’s violence. That said, however, for many years other authors have written about the way in which broad social work intervention has been (mis)used to perpetuate power and control over those whom it purports to assist. Good intentions abound, and there have been many dubious (and unsafe) interventions and public professional pontifications that have taken place, as Margolin (1997) articulated “…under the cover of kindness”100.

There is also the question of my involvement in and connections to the state peak body, No To Violence, Male Family Violence Prevention Association (NTV). For close to ten years, I was a volunteer telephone counsellor with the Men’s Referral Service101 (MRS). My professional employment and interests have seen my contribution to the organisation grow. I have been a member of the NTV

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100 For example Lunbeck (1994) argued that social workers manipulate, among others, hyper-sexualized women and girls while in ‘The Rise of the Therapeutic State’, Polsky (1991) proposed that social workers define and control “juvenile delinquents”. Lipsky (1980) demonstrated that social workers leverage power through their professional status over clients by manipulating social welfare regulations and work environments. Handler (1973) showed some of the means by which caseworkers misuse power, while more than forty years ago Lubove (1965) pointed out the contradictions between altruistic helping and professional bureaucracy.

101 The Men’s Referral Service is a confidential telephone service for men who are making initial enquiries about stopping their abusive and controlling behaviours. The Men’s Referral Service is auspiced by NTV
Management Committee for three years, 2000-2002, and am currently a member of several sub committees. As part of my own continuing professional education I completed the Graduate Certificate Social Science (Men’s Behaviour Change Program Group Facilitation) that was developed and delivered jointly by NTV and Swinburne University.

I was employed by NTV in 2000 on a nine month project to undertake a review of the industry ‘bible’ for this work, the standards manual for facilitating MBCPs, *Men’s Behaviour Change Group Work: A Manual for Quality Practice*. Due to political positioning at the time this review became a discussion paper for the sector to critique accountable and transparent practice. I currently provide, on a fortnightly basis, direct professional supervision to the MRS volunteer telephone counsellors, as well as training in various modules on family violence. I am on the committee that oversees agency and practitioner compliance to the standards of practice. Additionally, I am a member of the editorial committee of the organisation’s twice yearly publication “NTV Journal”. Thus, my involvement with the sector, and particularly the ‘gatekeepers’ - NTV, MRS and Swinburne University - is considerable.

**Conclusion**

This chapter considered issues that were raised in formulating, constructing and conducting this research, reflecting on the outline and foundation of the research. Second, this chapter considered the qualitative methods that were used to gather data for analysis. In an endeavour to provide a robust engagement with the issues data was sourced from diverse locations and provenance that included review and

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102 If you like, the ‘policing committee of compliance’. Here I ‘stake my claim’ to support and enforce the dominant discourses of the party line. The irony does not escape me.
analysis of the literature, semi-structured interviews with key sector agents, and analyses of agency-sponsored advertising material.

This chapter considered amongst other reflections the social position of myself as researcher and social agent when using poststructuralist feminist interpretations of discourse analysis as a research methodology: that which emphasises the enmeshment of the researcher’s subjective self in the research, and the need to engage reflexively with that dynamic. This chapter concluded by reflecting on ethical issues and possible sites of conflict of interest that are inherent within the reality that, as the researcher, I am inextricably interwoven throughout the very frameworks and discourses that are being critiqued. This is particularly important in the context of men doing ‘feminist-influenced’ research as there is a need to argue that it is possible for male researchers to construct an epistemological and methodological framework within which to research and critique working with men and men’s behaviours. This methodology engages more integrally with feminist-sympathetic frameworks through making visible researcher influence and interpretative discrepancies. Thus, it is more likely to divest personal biases as opposed to compartmentalising the subject of the research within a mould of determinism.
CHAPTER 4

FOCUSING THE RESEARCH LENS

Introduction

In this chapter I outline and consider the theoretical paradigms and perspectives that inform this research. The theoretical framework within which this research resides, as previously mentioned, is a poststructural feminist analysis that critiques the various ways in which agents attempt to establish jurisdiction over their expression of action, authenticity and outcome. This chapter explores the relationship between poststructuralism and a feminist analysis of men’s violence to enable the exploration of developing an appropriate conceptual discourse analysis framework. While not being homogeneous, these theoretical perspectives challenge meta-narratives and question the ways in which knowledge is structured and acted upon by discourses of power, attuned through factors such as enlightenment heritage, instrumental reason, and the influence of the media (Rosenau, 1992:13).

The initial point of reflection in this chapter considers my own gendered position in being a man and analysing engagement with and challenging and critiquing men and men's behaviour. When enquiring upon critical studies of, on, and about men, it would be prudent to isolate that the focus of the critique is not simply the exposition
of men as male agents; rather, the illumination of the dynamic of men’s power, privilege, control and domination. While there is diversity within the generic philosophies and theories of feminism, there are shared values that form the foundations of research that is influenced by feminist analyses. I will argue in this chapter that feminism has a lot to offer men; as men have always been present in the political dialogue of feminist discourses challenging the social construction of prescribed gender roles and the privileged position of men’s oppression of women.

In seeking an alternate men’s standpoint that is supportive of feminist frameworks, there is an expectation to expose the foundations upon which the taken-for-granted presumptions of men’s power and privilege are based. Thus, external structural locations are exposed as well as the interpretive construction of subjectivities. Poststructuralism and critical discourse analysis are complemented through these frameworks as there is a quest to isolate and challenge oppressive socio / political structures as well as the underlying philosophies upon which they are based. An epistemological engagement with feminist philosophy can show how language of knowledge, and the use of both language and knowledge, has been, and continues to be, influenced by patriarchy and privilege. There would appear to also be a need to consider seeking to challenge subjective / objective dualism, as there is never neutrality in the selection of both methodology and standpoint.

I argue in this chapter that it is in men’s emancipatory interests to change. Amongst other issues, I reflect upon the expectation of structural change that may or may not follow on as a result of a man’s attendance through a program of behaviour change intervention; that is, an individual man on an individual journey. While men

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103 See, for example, Pease (2000).
can respond and choose to reject their capacity to control and dominate through a
greater understanding and engagement with the politics of gender, it could be argued
that there are concerns that men might embrace change in ways that respond to their
perceived needs rather than addressing the socio/political structural status quo.

In this chapter I explore the focus and value of a poststructural lens to critique and
deconstruct the ‘taken-for-granted as truth’ language and claims that agents use. It is
worth noting that many writers use the terms poststructuralism and postmodernism
somewhat interchangeably. Their similarity enjoys a common critique of modernity
that points out that social relations and identities are diffuse and differential. I will
argue, however, that while I am in sympathy with this shared critique, there are
important differences between the two paradigms.

Feminism appears to have had at times an ambivalent relationship with
poststructuralism. On one hand there are claims that the collective political struggle
against oppression and domination is undermined (Smith, 1990) if more essentialist-
based categories are dismissed. The narrative and collective voices of the
homogenous group gives way to a structure more individualistically located, and
through this process the validity and authenticity of the voice and experiences of the
political community is pushed aside. However, I will argue that there is a valid
place for feminist theorising that embraces poststructural deconstructive frameworks
to critique such institutionalised constructs as patriarchy and male privilege; and, in
so doing, allows greater scope for the narrative of the dominated and oppressed to be
principled. (Hirschman, 1992)
While not wanting to conflate poststructuralism with Foucault, this thesis has been influenced more by Foucauldian sensibilities than other ‘post’ feminist interpretative frameworks\textsuperscript{104}. However, Foucault has not been without critique from numerous feminist writers who argue that unity, continuity and similarity have been silenced within this doctrine while diversity, discontinuity and difference have been privileged (Eisenstein, 1988). This implies that the systemic domination of women by men can be overlooked if it is argued, as Foucault does, that power is not only everywhere, but freely available to all. Of concern is that this also infers that the victims of oppression and domination have an obligation to accept some degree of responsibility for their oppression. However, to state that power is diffuse and varied is not to suggest that the power between men and women is equal (Hollway, 1982). Thus, I take the position through this research that it is more useful to elucidate the multiplicities of discourses and practices that continue to oppress women.

**Men critiquing men**

When considering a critical study of men, the clear focus here for me is directed at the critique of men and men’s privilege, power, control and domination – not simply the study of men as males. There would appear to be a number of issues of content and process that are immediately raised for men when considering undertaking research that will critique both men, and men’s behaviour. Initially, there is an inquiry as to the motivation that drives the research, and the manner in which the (male) researcher is engaging with both the research question and the research process. That is, what is the personal agenda that is being promoted through the development and articulation of the research?\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{104} Such as deconstructivist paradigms - vis-à-vis Derrida - for example.

\textsuperscript{105} This is a point that I reflected on in considering my own ethical engagement with this research.
Second, as Hearn (1998) suggested, is the questioning of the interweaving of politics that men have to the research. Included within this interrogation is the “…political relationship of men (as) researchers to feminism, women’s information, women’s experience and women’s research” (1998:41). Implicit here are questions that concern both an analysis of philosophical positions and standpoints, and consequent action on those standpoints. Also of consideration is how men are able, or perhaps more importantly prepared, to respond to the particular research agendas that feminism throws up. For example, how do men engage with challenges to the violences of men without feeling threatened or responding with defensive tactics such as minimising and denial?

Poststructural critics of the taken-for-granted have questioned whether it is now possible to consider meta-narratives as truth. The standpoint that has been considered to be ‘objective’ is, in reality, the accepted mainstream bias. As Haraway (1989) pointed out, “…as research paradigms evolve to reflect diverse gender, ethnic, class and cultural perspectives, much of the established body of (objective) ‘scientific fact’ has turned out to be science fiction” (1989:40). Individual experience, and the enlightenment that fragmentation of knowledge opens up, means that theory and knowledge are in a continuous state of flux, and the changing dynamics present a clinical dissection and discarding of the power parameters and tensions that essentialism and absolutism held as truth. This can obviously be very problematical for men, as we have dominated objectivity and knowledge; including how both these have been studied, what has been studied, and what has counted as knowledge and authenticity. Methodology is an important issue here, as there is an inherent danger that “…(m)en’s research in isolation from feminism is likely to reproduce some of the ‘knowledge’ of anti-feminism” (Hearn, 1998:43). It may be
more feasible, as Grosz (1987) suggested, to consider that there are multiple methodological possibilities that are able to more holistically embrace the diversities of complex multiple oppressions; as there is diversity amongst feminism and a plurality of masculinities. This would more clearly reflect, as Hearn (1998) articulated, “…the nature of social reality, perception and politics…(that calls) to undermine the grand narratives of the malestream” (1998:43). Indeed, the acknowledgement of the plurality of masculinities allows the opportunity to look beyond gender to isolate and name the means by which gender intersects with issues of social class, culture, religion and sexuality. As Erturk (2004) suggested, this implies that some men may experience subordination, and that some women may exercise power over some men. Given that there are clearly acknowledged hierarchies that exist between men this also suggests, as White (1994) pointed out, that the existing social system disadvantages some men. I would suggest that it would also be in men’s interests to consider more substantially the ways that gender frameworks impact upon their lives.

**Men and feminist theory**

For the purpose of this research, it is useful to consider how men might engage with feminist theories and insight, a debate that essentially critiques men. It has not been uncommon for men to embrace female theorists from only a particular position on the feminist polemic, for example, the liberal feminist position of Friedan (1963) or the feminist object relations theories of Chodorow (1978), while dismissing or belittling the texts of more radical essentialist writers such as Daly (1978) or Dworkin (1981). It would seem important then to enquire as to how men could engage with feminism without appropriating it. What is it that these men would be wanting from this dialogue? To my mind, a commentary on feminism and feminist
theory should not be an exclusively female-reserved discourse, as it is incumbent upon feminism to confront the privileged position of men in women’s oppression, and the place of men in that dialogue. Hanmer (1990), for example, pointed out that “…the Women’s Liberation Movement began with a critique of men. They were always present, explicitly and implicitly. To reduce women’s studies to the study of women and the differences between us is to deny our origins” (1990:26). 106.

Feminist theory has been peripherally acknowledged and critiqued by many male writers in the mythopoetic and masculine therapeutic fields. 107 Leonard (1982) argued that some male writers on feminism exaggerated differences between feminists so as to divide women. Morgan (1992) suggested that male writers on masculinity and gender run the risk of understating the influence of feminism through a “…mis-recognition of feminism as being about women and women alone and through a failure to recognise the significant scholarly contributions of feminist women” (1992:7). If men read feminist theory it follows at least in theory that they must endeavour to make a response to the feminist arguments that are proposed. It would be difficult for men to be impartial and often more difficult for many men not to feel threatened. If men are not able to reassess their gendered roles as being dynamic and open to the interventions of social influence and translation – and not at the whim of some presumed hard-wired biological determinism - then progressive standpoints and / or feminist critiques of patriarchy, dominant and traditional masculinities, male privilege and abusive male behaviours are going to be felt by men at a very deeply personal level of attack (Schwalbe, 1996:187).

106 There could perhaps be no sterner critic of dominant strains of feminist theory than Delphy (1993) who, in connection with feminist difference theory, articulated her despair at the apparent “…deep and unacknowledged desire not to change anything at work behind the intellectual haze” (1993:6).
107 For example, Bly (1990), Biddulph (1994), or Farrell (2001).
While I will deal in more detail later in this chapter with the scepticism of some theorists towards men changing, it is worth reflecting on earlier frameworks of doubt put forward by feminist scholars. Daly (1973) suggested that men reading and researching feminism need to be approached with considerable caution because their motives are to access “...easily exploitable knowledge about women’s situation” (1973:32). Canaan and Griffin (1990) were sceptical with regards to men ‘navel gazing’ about feminism even going so far as to suggest a ‘divide and conquer’ agenda from men. However, Greig¹⁰⁸ (2001:4) made the point that “…(t)here is an understandable fear that by placing men at the centre of the analysis women may once again be marginalised”. The insights of feminism and its critique of the social construction of femininity as a set of prescribed gender roles also apply to men and masculinities.

A profeminist standpoint

Along the journey of change, men are presented with particular difficulties that arise from challenges to our privileged positions in a traditionally male-dominated world. This vantage point can potentially provide a practical perspective from which to critically assess the status quo of the experience of oppression and the privilege of being male. Morgan¹⁰⁹ (1992) suggested that there is a danger in dominant cohorts researching their own positions as “…these considerations may be more in terms of justifications than in terms of (an objective) critical analysis...(and accordingly) their investigations may always be suspect” (1992:29). It is valid to enquire whether or not it is possible for a man to (want to) develop a broad enough perspective in order to be able to critically assess positions of power and privilege? Presuming that

¹⁰⁸ A man.
¹⁰⁹ Also a man.
can be the case, how ‘feminist’ can men be? Are we aspiring to take over this label and descriptor as well?

Defining language is a useful and appropriate point from which to commence as there is diversity in the use of terminology. I understand that many feminist women wish to reserve the label ‘feminist’ solely for women’s views of gender by women, whereas other women use ‘feminist’ to describe progressive gender perspectives by both men and women. My own position is that, while I believe that men can be supportive of feminism and its inherent fundamental philosophies, we cannot ‘be feminists’ simply because we do not have women’s experience. Brod (1998) suggested that if men attempt to claim the use of the word ‘feminist’, there is a danger of men appropriating women’s work. May (1998), for example, stated that he would be happy with the terminology ‘progressive male standpoint’. I would also be somewhat open to the terminology ‘feminist sympathetic’; although I feel that this is more cumbersome and, to my mind, carries with it a certain paternalism with which I don’t feel overly comfortable. What is of particular importance, however, is men’s sense of responsibility for their own and other men’s sexism, the need to draw men’s attention to the privileges that men receive – and how these privileges harm women, and an acknowledgment that men continue to benefit considerably from the oppression of women (Douglas, 1993).

It is often difficult and awkward for men to acknowledge male privilege. Morgan (1992) questioned the extent to which it is possible for many men to raise a critical lens “…to develop…forms of self-knowledge which will inevitably lead to the erosion of male power and privileges” (1992:37). Many men do not see themselves as privileged and powerful and certainly, relative to other men, some are not,
differing as they do through such variables as class, race, sexual orientation, education, employment status etc. Thus, this journey of discovery and change can be an on-going engagement for some men in an attempt to gain an understanding of their constructed gendered ways of being. On this point, Bar On (1993) suggested that what positions a feminist-influenced standpoint needs to be clarified. Lather (1990) proposed that “…to do feminist research is simply to put the construction of gender at the centre of one’s inquiry” (1990:17) and that the gender of the researcher is, perhaps, not specified.

Many streams of feminism have attempted to argue that there was very good reason for trusting the vantage point of the oppressed, and that starting from women’s experience would provide considerable clarity. Held (1985) proposed that a feminist standpoint would provide quite a different understanding of even physical reality. This perspective alludes to distinctly ‘female ways of knowing’, and the implication that women and men think in entirely different voices. This position entails a biological determinist infusion, and makes very limited demands upon any theoretical position. In fact, as Haack (1993) pointed out, the belief in ‘female ways of knowing’ is somewhat reminiscent of male chauvinist denigrations of women. It would seem that those who promote this perspective find themselves aligned with those who have always held the view that women think differently from men. Haack (1993) suggested that there is a concern in advocating for distinctly ‘female ways of knowing’. All any human being has to go on, in figuring out how things are, is his or her sensory and introspective experience, and the differences in cognitive style, like difference in handwriting, seem more individual than gender-determined (1993:33).

It is worth pointing out, of course, that not all feminist standpoints have their genesis in this essentialist position.
Traditional perspectives for men have been based around the power and privilege that have been enjoyed simply by virtue of being men. An alternate progressive / profeminist men’s standpoint would not seek to replicate the taken-for-granted status quo of power and privilege, but would attempt to expose the foundations on which they are based. This demands both an ethical framework, and the motivation to confront and challenge personal biases and privilege that are solely based on sex. This is difficult for many men, as it represents a robust critique of men, masculinity and maleness and there is a need – not always acknowledged by many men – to separate behaviour from the sex / gender.

Redman (1996) suggested that, for many men, the disempowering process is in fact very empowering through the gains of personal liberation, and that this often comes about through first-hand experience of oppression – often at the hands of other men. May (1998) asked if men care to / can aspire to sufficient critical viewing distance from the dominant position of their gender grouping to be able to be critical of that position of power. He suggested that they can, but offers up the sobering caveat that “…not many men will be likely to achieve this, and they will no doubt only be able to approximate the…standpoint(s) that…women…occupy” (1998: 343). Additionally, it would not be out of place to suggest that men will never be able to completely critically distance ourselves from our positions of privilege and power, as we will continue to be beneficiaries of our position in ways that we are frequently not conscious of. However, if this means that men are thus locked into an ontological paradigm within the framework of patriarchy, where is there a position, as Seidler (1994) enquired, to explore the construction of our own masculinity? The advantage of critiquing a standpoint is that it posits a relation to structural location as well as to the discursive construction of subjectivity. This is important in the
context of this research as I will argue in chapter six that the cutting edge of feminist analyses of structural location vis-à-vis MBCPs has been blunted.

Within feminism there is an endeavour to seek out and challenge incumbent socio/political structures as well as the underlying principles upon which they are based. This position complements both poststructuralism and critical discourse analysis, and from this perspective there emerge more specific issues and resources with the objective of unravelling power and hierarchy. Contemporary scholarship acknowledges the need to understand the interaction and existence of women and men outside of the more restrictive traditional methodological paradigms, as well as the permeation of patriarchy through language and knowledge, and the understanding of that knowledge. Spender (1980) suggested that the use of language in the naming process is not a random or neutral act - all naming is biased, and the process of naming is one of encoding that bias. When one particular group – men - holds a monopoly on the naming process, its bias is embedded, strengthened and accepted as the appropriate foundation. Thus, those who have the power to name are in the strongest position to exert control and influence – that is, to set and maintain the agenda (1980:42).

Harding (1990) reinforced Spender's point, suggesting that a feminist-founded epistemology seeks to confront and challenge the objectivism and interpretations that are conceptualised through the use of a biased and sexist language. Rejection of this language contributes to the producing of a more complete, and less biased, appreciation of an individual's subjective experience. To not do this, Harding

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110 For an account of why some feminists have generally privileged particular aspects of subjective experience, see Bar On (1993). For a critique of this position that argues that the privileging of personal experience is highly problematic for some feminists, see Spivak (1987) or, perhaps more extremely, Hoff Somers (1994:75-86).
argued, only ever reveals an incompleteness where "...women's experiences are researched and analysed using the conceptual procedures, methods of research and research models (that are) provided by sexism" (1990:165). Reinharz (1991) proposed that unequal gender relations are established through more mainstream research paradigms failing to challenge dominant discourse. The questioning from a feminist perspective is directed at sifting out meaning and patterns, looking at and embracing context rather than prediction or control. Feminist-influenced research, as Harding (1990) suggested, must therefore challenge the standard of objectivity that has continued to vex epistemology.

While a feminist critique of mainstream social research contends that discourses have to reflect the values and standpoints of its source, the academy in particular is subject to an inevitable (male) bias, and an exclusion of multiple points of view. This critique has been the starting point for much feminist-oriented research. Mies (1983) suggested that the masculine way of knowing and researching has been equated with the scientific method and with objectivity. Elshtain (1985) and Riddard (1986), for example, expressed similar sympathies with this perspective that essentialises gender dualisms that rely on a position that embraces biological determinism. This vantage point proposes that constructed concepts such as maternal love, male logic, feminine nurturing, paternal authority etc. are predetermined in men and women and, thus, both men and women have intrinsically different ways of knowing. This perspective, which offers up a very questionable lens based solely on biology, is rejected through this research. Accordingly, this research asserts the need to question, query and confront in a manner that promotes "...ambivalence and multiplicity" (Lather, 1991:82), and challenges the assumptions about tradition, foundations and foci, and interactive dynamics.
There is support for the perspective that it is possible for men to change our vantage point and reject a biological and structural determinism. Harding (1987) proposed that the ability and commitment to contribute to feminist research are not biologically determined traits. If women are not the sole contributors to feminist theories and knowledge, men are obligated to contribute and, in doing so they must assume responsibility for the standpoint from which they are speaking. This requires an active engagement in the struggle of change in both the private and the public arenas.

**Men and change**

The issue of men and change is a core component of the focusing of a profeminist lens and has been the focus of considerable debate within feminism. One view is that the perspective that changes in men’s behaviour, practices and vantage points should come about ostensibly for altruistic, moral and political reasons. An alternate position is that these changes from men should take place primarily for themselves. These views may not necessarily be in opposition to each other, but they provide a fertile ground for on-going discussion. As previously mentioned, one of the key foci within this debate has been whether men can be - and are prepared to be - challenged and to change their behaviour to encompass relationships based on respect, nurturance, safety and equality. Pursuing this line more directly led Segal (1993) to enquire whether the more that women were putting pressure on men to change, the more that men “…will be forced to question the unthinking presumptions and unexamined prerogatives of masculinity” (1993:634). In reflecting upon this issue more than twenty years ago, Hite (1987) asked

(if men will) change without being forced to? Or will men change as part of a larger social change? Do most men believe that non-hierarchical relations are possible? Do men want these with women? (1987:685).
It may be asked then as to what intensity of demands women are prepared to make on men. Lieberknecht and Lieberknecht (1982) proposed criteria with which to consider whether or not men were committed to a framework for the breaking down of patriarchy. In their worldview, a man ascribing to a profeminist standpoint would treat sexism as a problem affecting both women and men, recognise that men have certain advantages in a sexist society and be willing to give up these advantages in order to promote equality between women and men and have taken actions in his personal and public life to erase injustices based on gender (1982:14).

Thus, what would appear to be imperative here is the broader political question and engagement of querying, challenging and confronting men’s behaviour at the structural foundation. This becomes a core component of questioning in relation to the foundational axioms, nomenclature and rhetorical positioning put forward by advocates of men’s behaviour change intervention within this research.

One of the most repeated demands from women is that men simply listen to what women are saying, and the majority of men aspiring to a profeminist standpoint would claim to have a vested political and personal interest in this. It is worth considering how men can respond to what it is that we (think we) are hearing. Segal (1987) noted that early radical feminist thought proposed that the dominance of men was inevitable and that the oppression of women by men was biologically determined. It would therefore be in men’s best interests to ‘co-opt’ feminism into men’s power base, and to then legitimise it as having achieved greater authenticity. Through the use of feminist analyses and similar influences, men can potentially exonerate themselves and continue to maintain positions of privilege and power. In this way, as Segal (1990) claimed, defence against change may in fact be a means by which men can
(modernise) masculinity, allowing (them) to experience some of the pleasures more traditionally connected to women’s lives...while nevertheless retaining privileges and power over women more generally (1990:290).

Feminism has represented a considerable threat to many men for many reasons, not the least of which are the dual threats to our male status and income. Thus, it is not surprising that the sincerity of men genuinely interested in change may well be doubted. Within the context of this thesis, while one man may change his individual behaviour through the intervention of a men’s behaviour change program, there is very little evidence of any change in men’s structural domination\textsuperscript{111}.

It would seem clear that traditional masculinities do not provide a solid foundation for holistic egalitarian relationships for many men. Various writers around ‘men’s issues’\textsuperscript{112} have suggested that the male role brings a burden of responsibility which oppresses and deforms men, leaving them with, for example, shorter life spans than women and greater stress-related health issues. Nelson (1987) commented that

\begin{quote}

(i)f men take on feminist knowledge they will do so...because it is in their own interests. (I)t is absurd to assume that men will take a feminist commitment as something that men are doing entirely for women (1987:172).
\end{quote}

There is no doubting that patriarchy can have a substantial negative impact on the lives of men and boys. There is considerable energy and effort invested in replicating and reinforcing the patriarchal divide. Men do feel pain and grief, loss and sadness. Many men have been sexually abused as boys\textsuperscript{113}, and many men are now seeking therapy for the lifelong effects of living under the domination of a violent and abusive father or an abusive authority figure. It is good for men to

\textsuperscript{111} As part of the interview process I enquire as to the expectation of structural change as a result of a man’s involvement in a behaviour change intervention.
\textsuperscript{112} See, for example, Moore and Gillette (1990), Keen (1991), Biddulph (1994), or Farrell (2001).
\textsuperscript{113} In the vast majority of cases by other males.
address these and other issues in their lives: though, how a mass movement of men, organised around men’s self interests, can contribute to the demise of structural and state-sanctioned oppression of women is uncertain. There often appears to be a desire to reduce the gender politics of oppression to an individual struggle at the personal level. Further, while there is a tendency to portray men as victims, Brown (1992) sceptically suggested that the new-found ability of men to show their emotions needs to be strongly combined with a desire and commitment to listen to the pain of others. Thus, in arguing that it may be in men’s best interests to change, there is a justifiable concern that we may change in ways that meet our needs rather than on challenging the structural status quo.

It is important to acknowledge that there have been principled stands taken by men throughout history (Kimmel & Mosmiller, 1992), and it is useful to consider the impetus for those precedents. In moving towards a more solidly grounded ethical framework for change, men can reject domination through a greater political understanding of the status quo. hooks (1992) suggested that having lived under oppression is not necessarily the key component to rebelling against the structures of domination. In applying reflections on anti-racist activism, hooks (1992) stated that “...individuals of great privilege who are in no way victimised are capable via political choices of working on behalf of the oppressed” (1992:13)\textsuperscript{114}. As one of the images of traditional masculinity is that of ‘the protector’, men can be open and sensitive to the moral and ethical issue of protection of women. Gondolf (1987) suggested that if men are really interested in change, justice and egalitarian

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See also, for example, Connell’s (1987) thoughtful reflection on his own influences as he considers how a “…heterosexual man, married, middle-aged, with a tenured academic job in an affluent country” (1987: xi) came to be interested in contemporary debates around gender. He reflects on a dis-ease with experiences of traditional masculinity, and responded to a holistic socialism that incorporated the political and the personal which he learned from living and working with women who were connected to women-specific activism.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
paradigms, then we should start by examining what an ethical relationship with women would look like. In adopting this critique, he suggested that men should not only consider the immediacy of our own partners, but also women in general.

I now consider the value and authenticity of using a poststructural lens in this research to critique and deconstruct the ‘taken-for-granted as truth’ language and claims that agents use. First, however, it would be useful to differentiate poststructuralism from postmodernism.

**Postmodern or poststructural?**

Frequently the terms poststructuralism and postmodernism are used interchangeably as though they refer to the same perspective. Their relatedness embraces a critique of modernity that points out that social relations and identities are diffuse and varied. There are, however, important differences between them. Foucault (1988b) reflected on "...not understand(ing) what kind of problem is common to people we call postmodern and poststructural" (1988b:34). Butler (1995) placed a clear distinction between the foci of poststructuralism and postmodernism by declaring that "...there is a difference between positions of poststructuralism which claim that a subject never existed, and the postmodern positions which claim that the subject once had integrity but no longer does" (1995:48).\(^{115}\)

Both postmodernism and poststructuralism argue against the meta-narratives of modernity. Butler (1995) portrayed postmodernists as being somewhat disillusioned with the promises of modernity as opposed to the reality. Bauman\(^{116}\)

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\(^{115}\) This is, due to its simplicity and clarity, my preferred definition.

\(^{116}\) See, for example, Smart (1995) who dissected the similarities and overlaps between post modernism and poststructuralism. Her preference was for the latter term for the reasons that she outlined.
(1992) contended that the fact of constant change has exceeded the capacity of the meta-theories of modernity to be able to comprehend or to more specifically direct action. Theories of postmodernity are founded on the claim that constant change and contemporary conditions of transformation are so fundamental that new cultural forms are developed and new conditions named in order to comprehend and intersect with uncertainty. Wykes (2001) regarded as crucial the distinction between the two positions arguing that a postmodern framework simply “…celebrates a frivolous kind of dismissal of all attempts to account for change in the world”. She proposed that this contrasts with poststructuralism which seeks to challenge objective truth as it recognises that diverse forms of power are inextricably linked to the production of regimes of truth that are forged “…from a will to power” (2001:18). This perspective is also epitomised by a Foucauldian analysis within poststructuralism.

One of the tenets of poststructuralism is that it presents a challenge to the way in which social and political discourses within contemporary society have failed to come to terms with the constitutive power of language. Weedon (1997) contended that both the plurality of language and the way in which meaning is in constant flux are basic foundations of poststructuralism. Poststructuralism considers that there is an unwarranted and unsustainable focus that is given to the role and status of individual action as the primary driver of change. Greater attention needs to be given to the way in which social realities are moulded by discourses that, through the constitutive powers of language, question, query and challenge primary assumptions such as identity, truth, and change. A poststructuralist position attempts to elucidate and promote perspectives that present as "...anti-dogmatic, pragmatic, flexible and contextually sensitive, and that require …a critically self-reflexive attitude towards
the effects of emancipatory ideals" (Healy, 2000:6). Meaning and purpose exist within textual relations that are in a state of flux; that are dynamic to the structural context of social interaction.

Perhaps though, as Howe (2008) suggested, it is not important to be detained by this argument of either / or, as “…the choice of nomenclature is, ultimately, inconsequential”. What is important, she argued is a focus on the “…methodology of paying attention to the discursive constructions of truth and the intersections of power and knowledge that are exposed when sex, violence (and criminal acts) are placed in a postmodern frame” (2008:19).

**A poststructuralist focus**

This research directs a poststructural lens towards the axioms, the ‘taken-for-granted as truth’ language and claims that agents use to establish jurisdiction over their expression of authenticity through this framework of behaviour change intervention. Bauman (1992) contended that the inherent dynamics of contemporary society “…admit no clear options and strategies that can even be imagined to be uncontroversially correct” (1992:185). The critical lens of poststructuralism is useful in deconstructing and isolating the issues of power, identity, and claims of authenticity. Much of the literature offering explanations and solutions for men’s violence in the family continues to be controversial and divided (Bograd, 1992:256; Day et al., 2009). The sector is charged with different perspectives and analyses compete for both limited funding and hegemony of what is regarded as appropriate intervention. A poststructuralist framework (Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1997) proposes that socially relative systems of meaning have an existence independent of individuals and can be incorporated to explain and account for a given event.
Critiques of poststructuralist challenging of the taken-for-granted consider such points such as the esoteric nature and language of poststructuralist philosophies, and the nihilistic and conservative implications that are inherent in their framework. Parton (1994) pointed out that poststructuralism has also been critiqued on the grounds that there is a failure to provide a suitable paradigm for progressive practice as there is no capacity to “…specify possible mechanisms of change and…to state why change is better than no change” (1994:110). Similarly, Lather (1991), for example, suggested that if the deconstructive process relativises everything, then no discourse has priority over any other position because there is no ‘truth’.

An important component of the early development of poststructuralist thinking was the locating of the meaning of language within a cultural framework (Weedon, 1997). This deviated from the then more accepted idea that meaning was somehow a fixed template that was genetically hard-wired within individuals. The work of Saussure (1974) is important here, as analysing the structures of language means looking for the rules and covert meanings that underlie speech and text. Saussure argued that the meaning of words derives from the structures of the language, not from the objects to which the words refer. It is the differences between related concepts that the rules of language recognise that give meaning. Thus, meaning is created internally, not by the objects which we refer to by means of them.

Fairclough (1992) suggested that there is a pattern of relationships between the signifier (the sound or written image) and the signified (the meaning implied) through which meaning within a text can be determined. Language is then conceptualised as a unique and somewhat idiosyncratic tool that is shared by, and through usage identifies, actors of the same community. As a theoretical basis, a
structural perspective maintains that power is a constructive force, suggesting that notions of identity, language and culture, for example, are constructions that occur external to the individual’s control. The process of deconstructing text is concerned with undoing the claim of domination of one means of signifying over any other. That is, no one meaning is reified, as meaning is dynamic and not anchored within an arbitrary relationship.

Weedon (1997) proposed that it was primarily through the work of Foucault that poststructuralist foundations came to be woven into a theory of language. Foucault continued the theme of the decentring of the subject that was introduced by Saussure. Included in this analysis are the ways in which discourse impacts upon institutions, the control of individual subjects through the plurality of meaning, and the discursive nature and structure of subjectivity (Cassell, 1993). It is only within a specific context that discourses have meaning, and while knowledge and power are implicit to each other, they should be considered as being both productive and repressive. Actors compete with differing interpretations of how language is used to construct claims of authenticity, and accordingly to ‘stake their claim’ of domination of one means of signifying over another as meaning is constructed through the language of culturally and historically specific practices (Mann, 1998). Thus, poststructuralism allows space for an acknowledging and understanding of the multiple realities that impact within a discursive environment, and how actors are positioned, and position themselves, in relation to other competing players and interests (Torfing, 1998).
Feminism, poststructuralism and critiques of Foucault

Many branches of early feminist theory asserted that there was an essential feminine that was oppressed by the domination of men (Daly, 1975; Butler, 1990). Poststructural feminism, however, has challenged the core humanist assumption that there are essential natures to women and men, for example, women being biologically nurturing and passive, and men being biologically aggressive and emotionally distant (Weedon, 1997). The idea that there is some essential commonality amongst women – all women – has been generally dismissed or deconstructed117 by those ascribing to a poststructuralist position118. A notable critique of western feminism in general has been that it takes the experiences of Anglo middle-class women and frequently projects this as being the representation of all women’s experiences. A poststructural lens is valuable in looking through this impasse. Clearly, all women reside in the category of ‘woman’ but that is where the similarity might end. To suggest that all women’s experiences are the same is to reinforce the hiding of power that separates women’s interests. Women have been, and continue to be, oppressed through the pervasive influence of patriarchy and associated male privilege, yet care must be taken to avoid collectively oppressing women further through uniformly homogenising their experiences (Soper, 1990).

Foucault (1977) challenged binaries for their inadequacies in explaining how power is manifest and constituted subjectively. His position was that “…(p)ower is not conceived of as a property, but as a strategy. One should decipher in it a network of relations rather than a privilege that one might possess” (1977:26). Any position of

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117 By deconstruction I am referring to the processes by which agents are able to identify, name and act upon what Parker & Shotter (1990:209) described as “…the original hidden premise of discourses” in order to halt the taken-for-granted influence and to construct alternate positions of subversion and resistance.

118 But not by many from an eco/feminist framework.
power could be met with a counter to it – that is, resistance. This supposition has been critiqued by numerous feminist writers who argue, as previously mentioned, that Foucault’s orthodoxy “…privileges diversity, discontinuity and difference while it silences unity, continuity and similarity” (Eisenstein, 1988:18). Of concern for many feminist writers has been the inference that the victims of power (the oppressed) need to take on board some blame for their oppression. Ramazanoglu (1993) critiqued Foucault’s framework and perspective suggesting that (a)nalyses of women’s experience of men’s power underlie feminist criticisms of Foucault. They lead feminists to suggest two aspects of power can conflict with Foucault’s understanding. First, women’s experiences suggest that men can have power and their power is in some sense a form of domination backed by force. Second, this domination cannot be seen simply as a product of discourse, because it must also be understood as ‘extra discursive’ or relating to wider realities than those of discourse (1993:22).

Thus, women’s systemic domination by men can be overlooked if it is argued that power is not only everywhere, but freely available to all. The feminist argument that men possess power over women appears somewhat tenuous through a Foucauldian analysis and lens that proposes that power is distributed and diffused widely throughout social relation networks. As Ramazanoglu and Holland (1993) proposed (t)here is an extraordinary gap between his conception of power coming from everywhere…and his intermittent acknowledgement of the cleavages between concentrations of power that can result. This concentration of power is interwoven with other social divisions but reproduces discourses and other institutional arrangements in favour of men (1993:242).

Smith (1990:505) claimed that poststructuralism undermines the political activist edge as it “…depoliticises the collective struggle against domination”. If essentialist categories are dismissed, then the voice of the collective group gives way to an individualist framework that pushes aside the validity and authenticity of the voice of the political community. Smith (1992) suggested that seen through the lens of poststructuralism, ‘feminist political action’ is somewhat oxymoronic as the hard-
won political activist strategies by which dualisms “…are converted into an either/or logic are undermined” (1992:505). Fuss (1987) similarly argued that while essentialist frameworks have been used as political tools by the dominant hegemony, essentialism can also constitute a very powerful political tool in the retaliatory hands of the oppressed.

Evans (1990) suggested that it is in all women’s best interests to continue a political struggle that focuses on an acknowledged sexual difference, as the cohort of ‘woman’ is still identifiable despite the multitude and diversity of experiences. A poststructural approach may then actually inhibit women in developing theories that best give voice to their experience. In distinguishing between feminist poststructuralism and poststructural feminism119 Hirschman (1992) expressed sympathy with the viewpoint that the principles of poststructural thought and theory render the supposition of unitary women and feminist frameworks incongruent. However, she also affirmed that there is a place for a poststructural feminism that embraces deconstructive frameworks to critique patriarchy and male privilege, and so allows the voice of the marginalised and oppressed to be given due priority.

It can be argued that there is compatibility between feminist theories and Foucault’s supposition of power. Healy (2000) suggested that Foucault’s framework acknowledges that differing manifestations of global domination exist and these theories can be interpreted to recognise that gender relations are structurally inclined towards addressing and accommodating the interests of men. There is a point of conjecture for Foucault through the means by which localised manifestations of power at the micro level are impacted upon and shaped by the greater macro world.

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119 She used the terms postmodern/ism which, in this instance, I am comfortable interchanging.
influences. Lloyd (1993) suggested that this analysis of the concept of power has broader implications for conceptualising patriarchy as it involves abandoning the idea that the intelligibility of patriarchy derives from the conscious decisions of men; and as such, would presuppose the rejection of the notion of some kind of headquarters that presides over its rationality (1993:444).

Thus, there is, as Lloyd (1993:444) reiterated, a focus on the need to analyse the “…multiplicity of discourses and practices that oppress women”. Weedon (1997) noted that within feminist discourse theory there has been a tendency to understate the idea of structure and focus more on the production of text. The practical bases for these constructs get marginalised in the machinations of deconstructing the ideological frameworks of femininity and women’s place. Given that materialist perspectives demonstrate the means by which men dominate women via a variety of discourses and manifestations, to state that power is diffused as Hollway (1982) suggested, is not to suggest that the power between men and women is in any way equal.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined and considered the theoretical framework upon which this research resides, a poststructural feminist analysis. This chapter reflected upon the relationship between poststructuralism and a feminist analysis of men’s violence to enable the exploration of developing an appropriate conceptual discourse analysis framework. While not being homogeneous, and at times in contradiction with the other, the broad church of these theoretical perspectives challenges the meta-narratives and questions the ways in which knowledge is structured and acted upon by discourses of power.
Initially, I considered my own gendered position in being a man and analysing engagement with and challenging and critiquing men and men's behaviour: isolating that the focus of the critique is not simply the exposition of men as males but the illumination of the dynamic of men’s power, privilege, control and domination. While there is diversity within the generic philosophies and theories of feminism, there are shared values that form the foundations of research that is influenced by feminist analyses; and men have always been present, to some degree, in the dialogue of feminist discourses that challenge the privileged position of men’s oppression of women.

I reflected in this chapter that while I believe that it is in men’s emancipatory interests to change there are concerns that men might embrace change in ways that respond to their perceived needs rather than addressing the socio/political structural status quo. I argued that an alternate male standpoint that is supportive of feminist frameworks must seek to expose the foundations upon which the taken-for-granted presumptions of men’s power and privilege are based. Poststructuralism and critical discourse analysis are complemented through these frameworks as there is a quest to isolate and challenge oppressive socio/political structures as well as the underlying philosophies upon which they are based. An epistemological engagement with feminist philosophy can show how language of knowledge and the use of both language and knowledge has been, and continues to be, influenced by patriarchy and privilege. There would appear to also be a need to consider seeking to challenge subjective / objective dualism, as there is never neutrality in the selection of both methodology and standpoint.
In this chapter I explored the focus and value of a poststructural lens to critique and deconstruct the ‘taken-for-granted as truth’ language and claims that agents use. While many writers use the terms poststructuralism and postmodernism somewhat interchangeably and their similarity enjoys a common critique of modernity that points out that social relations and identities are diffuse and differential, I suggested that there are important differences between the two paradigms.

While feminism appears to have had at times an ambivalent relationship with poststructuralism this chapter considered that there is a valid place for feminist theorising that embraces poststructural deconstructive frameworks to critique such institutionalised frameworks as patriarchy and male privilege, and in so doing allow greater scope for the narrative of the dominated and oppressed to be principled. While being aware of not wanting to fuse poststructuralism with Foucault, this thesis has been influenced more by Foucauldian sensibilities than other “post” feminist interpretative frameworks: acknowledging that Foucault has not been without critique from numerous feminist writers who argue that unity, continuity and similarity have been silenced within this doctrine while diversity, discontinuity and difference have been privileged. However, while power is diffuse and varied this is not to suggest that the authority between men and women is equal, and I have taken the position through this research that is more useful to elucidate the multiplicities of discourses and practices that continue to oppress women.
CHAPTER 5

THE PRACTICE OF DISCOURSE

Introduction

In this chapter I outline the features of critical discourse analysis. Of consideration is how discourse is able to shed light on how the political hegemony, jurisdiction, and authenticity of dominant groups is established, justified and defended. This is particularly relevant for defining structure, agency, and subjectivity - given that discourse is a vehicle for the reproduction and maintenance of scientific knowledge, and professional claims for righteous advocacy.

This chapter initially reflects upon the way in which the word ‘discourse’ is used across diverse disciplines to imply very different meanings. Due to the diversity of usage, the concept of discourse becomes everything: linguistics, structures, philosophies, paradigms, personal chronicles, and conceptual schemata. Many factors come to influence, and to be influenced by, the practice of discourse. The practice of discourse reconciles the existing connection between a particular discursive position – the text, and the wider socio / cultural practice in which it is framed. What is of interest here is how discourse is a mechanism for both constituting cultural and social relations, and is constituted by those same relations.
Fairclough (1995) considered that critical discourse analysis owed a considerable
debt to the practice of discourse which assumes a priority on the production,
distribution, and the consumption of texts. This reinforced the importance of not
separating text from the socio / cultural settings within which they are embedded. It
is useful in the first instance to address the relationship that exists between discourse
and hegemony. Power is discursively represented through hegemony, and is
constructed through multi-layered cultural and social parameters. In critically
analysing discourse, hegemony needs to be considered as a contributing paradigm
within which claims of authoritative legitimation are made. Thus, hegemony is used
in undertakings by actors to attribute intention and purpose. This chapter will
consider how this comes to manifest through struggle and the ideological
positioning and constructing of agents’ political agendas.

The dynamics of the practice of discourse involve how agents both produce the text
of discourse and how they interpret that text through then positioning themselves
along a political continuum. This chapter will consider how agents, in an effort to
avoid potential ambiguity, have internalised interpretations and predictions of text,
and arrive at the practice of texts by excluding other possible meanings.

**Discourse Analysis**

(i) **Explaining discourse**

Multiple conceptions of discourse exist. It is both a theory and a method of critical
engagement with language as a social practice and, as Fairclough (1989) suggested,
language that is conditioned by other non-linguistic features of society. Accordingly,
there exists the capacity to construct linkages between traditional concerns of the
social sciences, and central insights that are afforded through poststructural thinking
Poststructuralism, in constituting the construction of social reality, prioritises the role, influence and claims of language. This assumes that there is no way of directly experiencing the social world, and that ‘reality’ can only come to be known through language. Within this parameter, McHoul and Grace (1991) suggested that by fixing norms and truth, discourses shape what can be written, said, and even thought within particular contexts. Parton (1994a) defined discourse as structures of knowledge, claims and practices through which we understand, explain and decide things. In constituting agents they also define obligations and determine the distribution of responsibilities and authorities for different categories of persons such as social workers, doctors, lawyers and so on. They are frameworks or grids of social organisation that make some social actions possible while precluding others (1994a:13).

Thrown into this mix are, of course, managers and facilitators of MBCPs whose “obligations and distribution of (responsibility) and (authority)” are defined within the discourse. Hunter (1983) reinforced this position, suggesting that the concept of discourse derives from attempts to provide histories that are reconstructions of the material conditions of thought or knowledge. Thus, what is focused on here is, as Hollway (1983:131) stated, an interrelated “…system of statements which cohere around common meanings and values”. In challenging the meta-narratives and the taken-as-natural designations of the social world, Foucault (1974) attempted to frame the temper and conversion of knowledges referenced to discursive formations. In considering this analysis, Mills (2004) described Foucault’s conception of discourse as something that produces something else (an utterance, a concept, an effect), rather than something which exists in and of itself and which can be analysed in isolation. A discursive structure can be detected because of the systematicity of the ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving which are formed within a particular context, and because of the effects of those ways of thinking and behaving (2004:15).
While discourses have a material existence through constructing ideas, they are also, as Foucault (1977:199) stated, the “field of objects” through which the social world is experienced and, thus, there is no reality outside of discourse\textsuperscript{120}. This does not propose that experiences such as men’s family violence or responses to it are entirely produced by language, but that it is only through language that these experiences can be understood. A social problem such as men’s family violence, as Blumer (1971) suggested, is in fact a process of collective definition that is profoundly influenced by those who ‘stake a claim’ on it in relation to it. As discourse facilitates conceptions about and understanding of them, these experiences are fundamentally shaped by discourse.

Fairclough (1992) argued that there has been an increase in the social importance and functioning of language which has, to a significant extent, been constituted by changes in language practices. Healy (2000) suggested that language has become much more central in the change process in which practitioners, activists and policy workers are involved. Feminist workers have challenged the language practices through which family violence is understood,…have contested the silences about experiences of family abuse, and have initiated campaigns for the public naming of such violence. From a poststructuralist perspective, the value of (these) activist practices …is (that) through generating new meanings, activists have increased the possibilities for understanding and action available to those who experience (male) family violence and those who work for them (2000:40).

Under a critical poststructuralist gaze, the ideology that is invested in language, and the production and reproduction of knowledge, needs to be given due salience, as discourse is the medium by which institutional knowledge is both reproduced and maintained (Leonard, 1997). Accordingly, as Fairclough (1992) suggested, discourse

\textsuperscript{120} A question worth considering here is whether there is anything outside of discourse – an extra-discursive reality?
as a theoretical category contributes to the construction of social identities and
subjects, contributes to social relations between individual agents and institutions,
and contributes to the construction of frameworks of knowledge, hegemony and
belief (1992:64). In this way, contended Torfing (1998), discourse analysis is an
undertaking to construct an anti-essentialist social theory through emphasising the
contingency of all social identities, relations and systems of knowledge and belief

This is not to say that discourse necessarily leads to a reification of language. It
should be noted from the start that discourse is not interchangeable with language
(Fairclough, 1992). Discourse, as a critical concept that does not give way to the
supposed given unity of particular domains of knowledge, has been defined as a
system of language, objects and practices: one that enquires as to who it is that
speaks on a particular object or event and (in particular) when, where and how
(Weedon, 1987:22). Discourse, it would seem, has the potential to offer a schema
for avoiding that kind of dead end analysis of reification. An awareness of narrative
practices discourages reduction and reification by treating any kind of produced
documentation as discourse, appropriately avoiding the simplistic dichotomy of
work and context or cultural and material conditions. To acknowledge how history
has been shaped by discursive practices is not to emphatically reject or deny
historical knowledge or the existence of the past. Rather, it challenges and confronts
the taken-for-granted assumptions of “...objectivity, neutrality, and the transparency
of representation” (Hutcheon, 1988:26) that underpin the majority of historical
writing. It is useful to consider also that the motive for studying discourse has a
focus on why particular issues become salient, as opposed to assuming that the
ontological status of a particular reality can be accurately identified. Effectively,
what theorists, historians, or anthropologists refer to as reality is a socio / culturally constructed reality whether one talks about language or material conditions. What is classified as reality may say as much about our epistemological assumptions as it does about the actual conditions of a natural reality (Isenberg, 1992).

(ii) Formation of discourses

A theory of discourse can construct conceptual schemata to consider language and structure, as well as illuminating the often contentious relationship that exists at many and varied levels of analysis between maintaining the status quo and discursive change. Fraser (1991), for example, proposes that a theory of discourse is able to shed light on how the hegemony of dominant groups and agendas is secured, justified and contested. It is worthwhile considering Foucault’s four-part notion of the formation of discourses, and how this impacts on establishing jurisdiction, claims for advocacy and expertise, and progressive professional practice. First, there are specific procedures that produce discourses and ensure that there are “…certain statements…but not others (that) occur at particular times, places and institutional locations” (Fairclough, 1992:40). This enables particular points to be articulated, while marginalising other claims as, suggested Featherstone and Fawcett (1995:27), the coherence of discourse depends on difference. Professional practice discourses in men’s violence intervention, for example, refer to ‘batterers’ and ‘victims’ as though each cohort is a homogeneous and distinctive grouping. This neglects both the differences within each cohort, and the commonalities across them (Healy, 2000).

\[121\text{ Consider also, Foucault (1981b: 52) in Healy (2000).} \]
Second, the interconnectedness of discourses and power holds prominence, as “...power and knowledge directly imply each other...” (Foucault, 1991a: 27), and all knowledge “...is defined by power relations” (Leonard, 1994:12). The point of contention here is not that specific claims are judged to be ‘true’ or not, but that there is an understanding of the processes through which claims of ‘truth’ become possible. Claims of truth have been critiqued by social theorists and writers who point out that these assertions have enabled actors such as welfare professionals, activists, and policy makers to exercise disciplinary power and judgement in relation to marginalised populations.

There is, accordingly, considerable power invested by the above named authors in the doctrine that claims truth and self-righteousness, and which is often abutted to a ‘them and us’ or a ‘right or wrong’ binary. It is these doctrines that “…(bind) individuals to certain types of enunciation and consequently forbids them all others; but it uses, in return, certain types of enunciation to bind individuals amongst themselves, and (to) differentiate them by that very fact from all others” (Foucault, 1981b:64). While doctrine establishes a concise and strict regime of what constitutes ‘truth’, it also culls and limits those with access to that privileged knowledge. Thus, as truth and power are interconnected, it becomes imperative, as Healy (2000) suggested, to take into account “…not only the effects of professional discourse, but also how subjugated knowledge’s can also be suppressed via the forms of knowledge...that activists advocate” (2000:41).

Third, discourses embrace both discontinuity and contradiction. As Foucault (1981b) suggested, in every context there are numerous discourses operating,

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123 Such as lived experience, for example.
overlapping, discontinuous or distinct. Stressing the importance of the conflictual, contextual and complex interactions of discourse challenges the unfolding social totality that is central to critical theories that inform progressive professional practice. For example, there is considerable variety from context to context, and from historical periods of time, in the way that discourses shape knowledge and, accordingly, practice, advocacy and policy. This is obviously particularly relevant to this research as, as I have previously mentioned, the language and descriptors of the ‘domestic violence’ sector have changed considerably over the last forty years.

Fourth, Foucault (1981b) emphasised a principle of exteriority that inquires as to the effects of discourse, and to the end result of their production. Forms and limits of discourse are uncovered in the practical effects of discourse. This may manifest itself, for example, in the often witnessed paradoxical situation whereby critical discourse may be appearing to promote egalitarian practice, but in essence is encouraging and reinforcing authoritarian power structures “…in so far as the ‘truth’ of the activist remains unquestionable” (Healy, 2000:41).

(iii) Critical discourse analysis

One of the principle points of interest for this research is that of the relationship that exists between discursive and material engagement. It is worth, at this point, considering the broadness of critical theory. While this research is located within the broad field of critical theories, the contingent nature of practice, predicting, and policy positioning is more robustly critiqued through the application of critical discourse analysis. A more than useful starting point is Luke's (1998:50) interpretation of critical discourse analysis to denote a poststructuralist focus on language in social institutions: one that provides a contemporary deconstruction of
how identity, social relations and, particularly, power are manipulated through both written and spoken texts. There elucidates a two-fold purpose to critical discourse analysis. While one focus is to de-construct the status quo and the taken-for-granted, the other is to rewrite social and cultural texts paying due service to the influence of the dynamics of language (Lee, 2000). Fairclough (1992) supported this perspective, suggesting that as a de-constructive instrument critical discourse analysis

aims to disrupt and render problematic the themes and power relations of everyday talk and writing. As a constructive instrument its focus is on …expand(ing) people's capacities to critique and analyse discourse and social relations, and allow a more equitable distribution of discourse resources (1992: 28).

Further supporting this point, Sotillo and Starace-Nastasi (1991) proposed that the two-fold ambitions of critical discourse analysis are to systematically examine (i) the class of discourse as an instrument of power, and (ii) discourse as a tool of the social construction of authenticity and reality. Dant (1991) suggested that this allows for a more sharply defined focus on the social and political capacities that critical discourse analysis provides, as it elaborates the tensions between political antagonists and, in particular, social classes.

While Foucault (1991) proposes formations of discourse, van Dijk (1993) considered how underlying principles of critical discourse analysis come to be defined. There are foundational philosophies through which the informed flavour of critical theory is directed upon socio / political questions and issues. An initial principle is that there is a primary motivation within critical discourse analysis in confronting and deconstructing issues within the social realm. However, there is not the fundamental focus in critical discourse analysis to contribute to any particular school of discourse theory, schema, or discipline. Any critique of critical discourse analysis, by definition, presupposes an applied ethics. Those ascribing to focus the
lens of critical discourse analysis are engaged in announciating their perspectives, principles and aims through a clearly articulated socio / political standpoint. This position requires of the analyst an activist / social critic stance that aims, amongst other intentions, to name, critique and deconstruct power dynamics on and between groups and social agents and actors (van Dijk, 1993:252).

**Discourse and hegemony**

Hegemony is the discursive representation of power and is, thus, a central feature in critical discourse analysis\(^\text{124}\). As a multi-layered process, the preserving of hegemony reinforces the roles that ideologies play in locating sites of struggle as “…(t)he formation of a strong metaphorical hegemony necessarily involves the creation of an ideological closure” (Torfing, 1999:102). Fraser (1991) proposed that hegemony can be conceptualised as the power to establish legitimate definitions of social issues, the power to specify distinctly the parameters of authentic disagreement, and the power to manipulate the political agenda. It is useful to regard hegemony as a grouping of discursive processes that, as Clegg (1993) suggested, endeavours to “…foreclose the indefinite possibilities of elements and their relations in determinate ways” (1993:27). Within this framework, agents act out efforts to discursively articulate and cocoon a hegemonic definition of legitimated reality. Through this they claim authority over sites of multiple contestations that involve differing discourses and varying discursive positions along a political continuum (van Dijk, 1998).

\(^{124}\) This is also a Marxist concept via Gramsci. See, for example, Holub (1992). It is also worth noting that the two concepts of hegemony and discourse come from very different traditions. Within this research hegemony is inclined as a subset of discourse, which is compatible to a large extent with the poststructuralist CDA orientation that I take. However, it does downplay other ways of thinking about and positioning hegemony or other aspects of CDA that would take a more materialistic emphasis. See, for example, Hearn (2004) or Howsen (2007).
Within a contested framework of ‘truth’ there are discursive battles fought for what constitutes a regime of truth. Foucault (1980a:93) claimed that agents are “…subjected to the production of truth through power…(and that power cannot be exercised) except through the production of truth”. Truth and power are to a large extent intimately interwoven in many ways as truth represents a considerable allocation of power: the issue for agents is to separate the “…power of truth from the forms of hegemony (and multiple discursive positions) within which it operates at the present time” (1980b:131). Hegemony, as a lived system of meanings and values of truth is, as Williams suggested, “…not simply an ideology (but) a sense of reality beyond which it is…difficult to move, (for most people it is) a lived dominance and subordination…(and one that is) internalised”\(^{125}\). And competing discourses, and multiplicities of truth within that, struggle and compete for hegemony.

Both Fairclough (1992) and Torfing (1999) put forward that the notion of discourse needs to be unequivocally tied to hegemonic struggle. Fairclough (1992) proposed that

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\text{(d)iscourse can be seen as the discursive facet of the contradictory and unstable equilibrium, which constitutes hegemony, and the articulation and rearticulation of orders of discourse is correspondingly one stake in hegemonic struggle (1992:91).}
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This is not to suggest that all processes of articulation are necessarily hegemonic. The processes of articulation need to include, as a necessary circumstance, the subversion of both oppositional and competing systematic exercises that are designed to articulate experiences in a different way. However, many manifestations of dominance give the impression of being jointly negotiated through various weavings of social and cultural interaction, communication and discourse.

\(^{125}\)Cited in Holub (1992:104).
Symbolic capital

The perspective of social power within critical discourse analysis is that which is in sympathy with Foucault’s analysis of social realm power as being both productive and oppressive, and as requiring to be exercised instead of being simply the possession of elites. However, some agents have a greater capacity than others to legitimate their nomenclature in staking their claim to authenticity. The ‘symbolic power’ that links language and social relations authenticates those agents to present the doctrine of truth. As I will articulate in greater detail in chapters 6 and 7, practitioners claim language such as ‘a feminist analysis’, or ‘individual responsibility’, for example, to present their authenticity and claim for truth. Bourdieu (1991) identified that idiosyncratic language that pertains to a particular discipline or sector is an expression of power that actors need to take on board in order to state their competency over others. This implies that “...(the) integration into a single linguistic community, which is a product of the political domination that is endlessly reproduced by institutions capable of imposing universal recognition of the dominant language, is the condition for the establishment of relations of linguistic domination” (1991:46). As Carmel (1996) pointed out, social relations and language are interwoven through symbolic power and habitus. Symbolic capital legitimates actors to speak with the voice and position of status and authority as they have the symbolic power to represent to the collective other the undisputed “…official version of the social world” (Mahar, Harker & Wilkes, 1990:13).
Bourdieu (1984) linked the concept of habitus to the sentiment of capital. For Bourdieu, these transposable dispositions incline agents to act and react, and can impact on various forms of capital; for example, in the way that being ‘a professional’ confers the capital of status and knowledge within the social and cultural setting. Habitus, though, does not strictly determine, it rather orients and correlates actions and inclinations. Bourdieu (1991) suggested that “…(t)he modalities of practices, the ways of looking…or even speaking…are full of injunctions that are powerful and hard to resist precisely because they are silent and insidious, insistent and insinuating” (1991:51). However, given that everything happens in a context, habitus should also be seen within the relationship to the sector, field or context in which it is located: that is, while the subject and standpoint may be constituted by discourse, identity is not simply determined. As mentioned above, the role and position of language cannot be overstated, and linguistic capital holds an important place as the definer of position and representation of, and in, the social world. Within a system of exchange this capital acts as a social relation that both includes and refers to all the actual and symbolic chattels that are sought after within a particular field.

**Framing text: the discourse of the professional**

Through the production, interpretation, distribution and consumption of texts, social agents attempt to establish jurisdiction over a sector. It is important to understand and locate the social and political contexts that impact on how texts are produced and interpreted, as these processes do not happen in isolation. Foucault (1984) questioned the “…transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems”, in particular “…how the different solutions to a problem have been

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126 Defined by Rosenau (1992) as the summed totality of socio/cultural and personal experiences woven into each actor, and having an impact on how the actor both interprets and is perceived by others (1992:58)
constructed; but also how these different solutions result from a specific form of problematisation” (1984:380). Interventions are undertaken by practitioners of “applied knowledge” (Rose, O’Malley and Valverde, 2006:9) in guilds and professions. Textual framing of the expertise performs a powerful function of controlling who can speak authoritatively about the subject. Interpretations about texts, in the totality of socio / cultural processes, limit the potential for ambiguity by excluding other possible interpretations. As Fairclough (1992) suggested (t)here are specifically ‘socio / cognitive’ dimensions of text production and interpretation that centre upon the interplay between the members’ resources, which discourse participants have internalised and (that they have) brought with them to text processing. There is also the text itself, which contains a set of cues for the interpretation process (1992:80).

One of the ways in which meaning is processed, controlled and disseminated is through the procedure of discursive framing. As Ross (2000) suggested, within the discourse of the political, framing is vital in ascertaining the contemporary social perspectives, predispositions and prejudices that impact on the way that all involved players127 both interpret and interact with the social world. Thus, framing is a paradigm for analysing how discourses are intertextually woven (by prejudiced actors no less) to represent the social world. Rein and Schon (1993) pointed out that given that this calls upon a relational context, new framing must be critiqued alongside entrenched social and cultural predispositions. This poses a difficulty though, in that frames are regarded as part of the taken-for-granted; that which is not questioned128.

Depending upon the extent to which new frameworks are in sympathy with incumbent ones, there is the capacity to make political positioning and reforms more

127 The individual actor, the organisation and the state.
128 The presumption of male privilege within society, for example, articulates this point quite succinctly.
acceptable to the general public. Within the context of this research, domestic violence is positioned and framed as a distinct behaviour that requires specific knowledge and intervention. Ross (2000) stated that the recognition of existing frames of reference is important, because within the standard portrayal of cognitive framing, the general public are assumed to be somewhat easily manipulated and are frequently portrayed as tabula rasa. However, this standpoint fails to consider individual agency and the constraints and boundaries of institutional rules and group norms. Thus, within the context of this thesis, the concept of framing seeks to analyse the contextual relationship that exists between contemporary social pre-distributions and key sector agents, and how these two influences invoke a dynamic to create consensus and disruption within discourse practice.

**Legitimation and the effects of discourse**

As mentioned above, the framing of text production is a crucial component of presenting a particular position so as to gain authenticity within the sector. Within a critical discourse analysis, the dominant dimension of text production is referred to as legitimation. As van Dijk (1998) stated

(1)egitimating discourses presuppose norms and values. They implicitly or explicitly state that some course of action, decision or policy is ‘just’ within the given legal or political system, or more broadly within the prevalent moral order of society (1998:156).

Agents engage in text production to affirm and reproduce the prevalent ‘correct’ position. Within this process there is the deliberate construction of a subjugated position that fits comfortably with the socially dominant subjectivity: that is, an extant moral political frame that certain interventions deserve support and authenticity, and others do not. There is a strategic importance in key sector agents promoting their dominant discourse. As Edelman (1988) noted
the strategic need is to immobilise opposition and mobilise support. While coercion and intimidation help to check resistance in all political systems, the key tactic must always be the evocation of interpretations that legitimise favoured courses of action and threaten or reassures people so as to encourage them or to remain quiescent. Allocation of benefits must themselves be infused with meanings: whose well being does a policy threaten and whose does it enhance? (1988:104)

Weedon (1997) proposed that the means by which individual discourses constitute subjectivity have considerable implications for the dynamic of challenging or reproducing future power relations. Discourse analysis casts a critical lens upon the way in which standpoints and relations are constantly open to change. The social positions of agents are constructed through considerable processes of cultural influences, institutional practices and politics that, as Taylor (1998) suggested, are shaped by macro and micro relations of power. The ‘domestic violence’ sector is awash with power dynamics at many and varied levels of influence and intensity. Within many discourses, concrete identities in social relations - based on a multiplicity of ascribed social and political categories - are forged. The positioning and jockeying of agents through these discourses does not suggest that standpoints are fixed or determined, but rather that they are socially constructed. That is, not only is the influence of hegemonic power recognised, but also the possibility of struggle – within the politic – of alternative definitions and standpoints.

The significance of this struggle becomes apparent when considering the capacity - or otherwise - of individual agents to influence sector policy and practice as a result of their structural location within the system. Policy and political influence is about the on-going tension between agency and structure that resides within a range of institutional relationships. There is, as Foucault (1991) suggested, a need when analysing discourse to enquire how the political struggle for the control of discourse is conducted between all involved actors. Torfing (1999) maintained that it is the
unique relationship between structure and agency that constructs policy and political discourses. As previously mentioned, one of the fundamental features of this research objective is that of identifying and naming competing discourses and assessing their roles in articulating subjects’ positions within the broad politics of the sector. There are many demands, and consequences, here in a sector that balances precariously on the flux of political correctness as there are material and ethical risks and dangers in being seen to step outside those dominant discourses that frame these interventions. For example, while all interviewees in this research were guaranteed confidentiality they were also asked why they wanted to maintain the cloak of anonymity. Some feared marginalisation from colleagues; others were concerned about their agencies’ response to their admissions; while others pointed out that strategic positioning – ‘toeing the line’ – was directly related to (scarce) funding. Several, though, raised the issue of enjoying being out on their own and wanting to be the ‘provocative maverick’ who wasn’t afraid of suggesting controversial engagement and intervention: a challenge to their perception of a conservative, authoritative status quo. As Bacchi (1999) argued, these differing positions focus attention on the constitutive power of discourse and its relationship to material practices. This recognises that agents can use language in the pursuit of their own goals – while simultaneously acknowledging the embeddedness of the agent in discursive systems that are characterised through tradition, and immersion in bureaucratic and political institutions.

Ball (1990) contended that agents’ frameworks do not simply arise from the language, but from the political and institutional relationships and social positions within the sector. These on-going battles construct certain discourses and to some extent were produced by competing discourses. While political positions of truth
appear as natural or objective facts, they are only ever partially located within certain frameworks that are subject to continual re-appraisal and deconstruction. Thus, the capacity to reconstruct orders of discourses within the field is somewhat dependent upon the fragmentation of structural positioning and social relations. Agents who possess sufficient symbolic capital have a much greater potentiality to seduce and convince others of the authenticity of their reality. As Torfing (1999) pointed out, social agents do not act on the basis of facts, but how those facts are represented; and, as Foucault (1984:110) said, “…discourse is the power to be seized”.

**Conclusion**

This chapter outlined factors inherent within a critical discourse analysis, considering the manner by which discourse is able to shed light on how hegemony, jurisdiction, and authenticity of dominant groups is established, justified and defended. As discourse is the means by which scientific knowledge and professional claims of valid intervention and practice are reproduced and maintained, this is particularly relevant for definitional paradigms of structure, agency, and subjectivity.

This chapter initially reflected upon the way in which the word ‘discourse’ is used across diverse disciplines to imply very different meanings. Due to the diversity of usage, the concept of discourse becomes everything - linguistics, structures, philosophies, paradigms, personal chronicles and conceptual schemata. Many factors come to influence, and to be influenced by, the practice of discourse. The practice of discourse reconciles the existing connection between a particular discursive position – the text, and the wider socio / cultural practice in which it is
framed. What is of interest here is how discourse is a mechanism for both constituting cultural and social relations, and is constituted by those same relations. As mentioned, critical discourse analysis owes a considerable debt to the practice of discourse which has a priority on the production, distribution, and the consumption of texts. This reinforces the importance of not separating texts from the socio / cultural settings within which they are embedded, and also considering the relationship that exists between discourse and hegemony as hegemony is a principle paradigm within which authoritative legitimation is claimed. This chapter considered how this comes to manifest through struggle and the ideological positioning and constructing of agents’ political agendas as hegemony has a vested interest in undertakings by actors to attribute intention and purpose.

This chapter also analysed how agents, in an effort to avoid potential ambiguity, have internalised interpretations and predictions of text, and arrive at the practice of texts by excluding other possible meanings. This is supported by the dynamics of the practice of discourse which involves how agents both produce the text of discourse, and how they interpret that text through then positioning themselves along a political continuum.
PART 2

ANALYSING AXIOMS
CHAPTER 6

KEY PROGRAM FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Part two of this research applies the previously-stated theoretical frameworks to the underlying key axioms upon which the sector and practitioners base their practice. Interview data is incorporated to deconstruct the juxtaposition of stated political and practice position, and the acting out of these claims. A focus of this section is to weave through and analyse the correlation between stated discourse and professional practice. A secondary reflection on the various recommendations made by key sector agents and practitioners and this contribution to accountable transparent intervention cannot be understated. However, how to manage conflict and contradiction between the discourse of individual practice and politically driven publicly stated discourse raises ethical and moral dilemmas for sector agents. Through the processes of text production, agents rely on rhetorical language as a strategic tool to reconcile ideological differences while frequently continuing to publicly state a position often informed by that which they believe they are expected to state: and which may be politically difficult to deviate from.

129 The sector speaks of being ‘accountable to the experiences of women and children’.
In this chapter some of the key underlying foundations of programs are examined through the theoretical lenses previously described. Groupwork interventions with men who use violence in the family have been founded upon various axioms that the sector has claimed and has been careful to portray as appropriate / best practice / essential for the work in their addressing of safety and responsibility. The claim of working under the philosophy of a feminist analysis of men’s violence will be examined. It is pertinent to remember that feminist theorising is inclusive of historical shifts, as Laing (2002) suggested, in articulating that it was second wave\(^{130}\) “...(f)eminism (that) applied a socio-political framework to understanding domestic violence...(rather than) as lying within the pathology of the individuals involved” (2002:2). While practitioners use language that has its genesis in the political location of women’s shelter and refuge sector, it will be argued that, in fact, feminist analyses of men’s violence have been depoliticised and co-opted, and that there is limited reference to the relevance of feminist critiques for men’s interventionist programs.

This chapter critiques the suggestion that programs appear to focus on the individual man’s violence towards individual women at the expense of the socio / political structural foundations within which this behaviour germinates. I will argue that the breadth and diversity of the violences that men use are more complex than simply an accumulation of actions by the individual. While there is an onus on individual men to accept responsibility for their own behaviour, it is incumbent upon men’s programs to challenge the diversity of socio / cultural variables that underlie men’s violence. It would also be pertinent to consider in this analysis the socially constructed category of ‘men as a class’. As a taken-for-granted of the social and

\(^{130}\) My emphasis.
cultural world, this designation is somewhat problematic. When talking about and engaging with the violence of ‘men’ it is important to acknowledge the differences between men as well as overlapping similarities.

Most programs appear to be founded upon a synthesis of cognitive behavioural psychology - incorporating male sex role social learning - and a broad-based feminist-sympathetic analysis (Gondolf, 2002; Day et al. (2009)). This overlaps to a degree with the behavioural model that I critiqued in chapter two. However, this foundation would appear to be problematic as there are inherent tensions here in the location of what counts as therapy, and what counts as education. Further, in reconstructing male dominance and gender inequality - as caused by men’s socialisation into sex roles - the political supports for male dominance are left unquestioned, and the behaviours of individual men are reframed as interpersonal issues and, thus, an appropriate focus for therapeutic intervention.

I consider in this chapter the on-going debate regarding a one-size-fits-all approach, and its conjoint identification of typologies of abuser, a practice that is more consistent with matching patients to treatment as is found in clinical psychology. While there are consistent correlations between attitudes and behaviour, the dominant discourse within the sector is that behaviour has its genesis in choice; and that a man assessed as having, for example, an ‘abusive personality’ (Dutton, 1998) can and has the capacity - and the option - to make other choices when / if he wishes. However, does that necessarily disregard the possible potential that typologising perpetrators may allow in terms of more specifically tailored interventions given that, despite the sector’s standardising, men are not an homogenous cohort?
The sector’s attempt to address the issue of transparency of practice has led to the establishment of benchmarks for service provision\textsuperscript{131}. These benchmarks have come to be manifest as standards of practice that formally document the required level of accountable practice. For some practitioners, it appears that the standards give clear guidelines that make the work not only easier, but more transparent and thus, hopefully, safer. For others, having prescribed standards appears to represent an invasion to their therapeutic practice, and their own ideas concerning innovative intervention. This chapter will consider the standpoint and position of the standards of practice in light of their importance to the stated philosophies of accountability and transparency, and in light of their revision in 2006.

\textbf{A feminist analysis}

There appears to be a growing convergence across programs concerning fundamental philosophies, foundations and standards for program delivery (Laing, 2002). As identified in “\textit{Ending domestic violence? Programs for perpetrators}” (NCP, 1999), this convergence is centred on a “…feminist analysis of power and gender” (1999:187), with the dominant discourse being that patriarchy is the sole cause of ‘domestic violence’ (Segal, 1990; McGregor & Hopkins, 1991; Yllo, 1993; NTV, 2006). Patriarchy structurally and conceptually creates, sustains, and justifies hierarchies, competition, and unequal distribution of power. Thus, men assert control over women through establishing positions of privilege in both the public and private spheres (Connell, 1995).

Baldrey, Bobic, and Laing (2002:32) noted that the majority of “…Australian programs claim to be underpinned by profeminist models challenging the control

\textsuperscript{131} This would have to include, in theory, both service provision and ideological accountability.
(that) male perpetrators exercise over their partners”. Most programs under the NTV peak body umbrella claim to be influenced by a feminist analysis of men’s violence (OSW, 2004)\textsuperscript{132}. As stated in the previous chapter, it is important to consider what this means in the context of the broader picture of the structural location of men’s violence against women. Francis and Tsang (1997) suggested that men’s programs working from a feminist-informed context imply that there is “…an acceptance of the feminist analysis of the origins of men’s violence against women” (1997:210). The focus of feminist analyses has been that patriarchy and male privilege provide the socio-cultural structural framework for the oppression of women. For example, Howard (2005) proposed that working with men in this context requires a “…feminist, socio-political stance that views men’s violence as a gendered crime occurring in a patriarchal context\textsuperscript{133}, giving emphasis to men’s sense of entitlement to power and control in the violent actions” (2005:48). Dworkin (1985) argued that the subordination and oppression of women is controlled within a socio-political dynamic that consists of four components: hierarchy, objectification, submission and violence. Thus, wherever there is violence in a social context, the other three components are solidly in place.

In reflecting on the bigger picture of socio-cultural influences, Walker (1990) identified diversity within feminist analyses of men’s violence against women. She suggested that on one hand there was the organisation of the structural dependence of women in the family, enforced by men’s use of authority: on the other hand, violence against women in the family was yet another example of the…direct male domination of women throughout recorded history (which included other forms of violence) such as rape, incest, and sexual slavery (1990:33).

\textsuperscript{132} Curiously, several programs identified in the OSW (2004) report did not self-identify as feminist-informed.
\textsuperscript{133} My emphasis.
Itzin (2000) reinforced Walker’s (1990) position, suggesting that the focus of a feminist analysis on the macro reiterated that the “…problem of men’s violence (is located) in the context of social power relations gendered in terms of male domination and female subordination” (2000:360). Therefore, in returning to the origins of feminist analyses of men’s violence, what is focused on and reinforced are the structural changes needed in social relations between men and women. Warters (1992:9) suggested that only from this standpoint can the framework of patriarchy and male privilege be challenged as a necessary precursor “…for any change in the incidences of wife abuse”. In a site of conflicting ideology and practice, care needs to be taken so that the political dimensions of men’s violence are not reformulated into individual deviant acts; thus distancing the phenomenon from wider social and institutional practices of oppression (Dankwort & Raush, 2000). It is worth noting, however, that equality for women does not necessarily guarantee a reduction in men’s dominating and controlling behaviours. While men’s violence can be in the form of authority by coercion, it may also be a response to challenges to that authority – an authority based on entitlement and privilege (Hearn, 1998:208).

The intersections of professional discourses are exclusive in both idiom and location, and presuppose a sector familiar with the realm of expertise. However, as Foucault (1975) suggested while they

appear to be speaking of one and the same thing …in their totality and their variety they form neither a composite work nor an exemplary text, but rather a strange contest, a confrontation, a power relation, a battle among discourses and through discourses. And yet it cannot be described as a single battle; for several separate combats were being fought out at the same time and intersected each other (1975:x).

In the context of interventions around men’s violence and abuse, sector agents align and position themselves through different vocabularies and juncured practices while
framing interventions in the rhetoric of feminism and professionalism. This reflects that discourses are not only descriptive, but also constitute social identities and structure professional focus, the role of workers, and the status of clients (Chambon & Bellamy, 1995). Within this framework, experts ‘stake a claim’ for competence and jurisdiction; a claim that creates a specific paradigm of intervention for the guild – one that precludes lay / non-membership participation (Fairclough, 1992). Thus, to accommodate that MBCPs are the territory of accredited practitioners, programs are required to articulate three primary components: they are provided by agencies / workers committed to and familiar with a feminist analysis of men’s violence towards women; the primary focus of the program must be the safety of women; the intervention is seen as socio / educational rather than therapy or counselling.

The usage of terminology such as ‘feminist-informed’ or ‘profeminist’ implies that the program / agency / worker has adopted a feminist analysis of men’s violence towards women, and that the intervention strategies within the program reflect this analysis. As previously mentioned, this focus needs to consider the historical agenda of feminist analyses of men’s violence which is that this behaviour is a reflection of patriarchal foundations that subordinate and oppress women. For example, while Dobash and Dobash (2000) identified men’s jealousy, men exercising their authority, men’s sense of entitlement to punish their women, and men’s expectations of women’s domestic labour as factors that lead to men’s violence against women, these are individual beliefs that the man might hold. Thus, it is important to locate the source - male entitlement and privilege that is located within gender relations in a socialized patriarchal system (Poon, 1993).
The stated view of the peak body, NTV, is that “…male family violence is an expression of male power and control in the context of a male dominated society” and this behaviour “…is embedded in the structures and collective unconscious of...patriarchal society” (NTV, 2006:32). However, it seems that it is not necessary to completely and holistically embrace this position, as NTV encourages anyone interested in working in the sector “...to read widely...(so as) to develop their own understanding and perspectives on male family violence” (NTV, 2006:33). This offer appears to have been expansively accepted across the sector as demonstrated in the PADV (2004:160-5) report where, not only did different agencies have different theoretical approaches, but frequently different offices of the same agency varied considerably in their theoretical understandings and locations of men’s violence and abuse. With this in mind, facilitators were asked to articulate their understanding of feminist frameworks within their interventions with men.

Q. How does a ‘feminist analysis’ inform your work?

MM2\textsuperscript{135}. In a nutshell men use violence over women as a means of dominating and controlling them. The men in the groups are there because at some level they have been in that position and used domination and control, violence and abuse.

MM5. Men are responsible for their behaviour which they use to get what they want. Violence is a choice that men use to keep women in their place.

FM4. It’s about holding men accountable for their behaviour. A feminist analysis maintains that men use various means of behaviour to exert power and control over women so the men in the group need to realize that their behaviour is about them controlling their partners...\textsuperscript{136} not about anger or anything else.

\textsuperscript{134} In a sector that is still controversial and seeking out credibility and authenticity through research and transparency, it is disappointing – and puzzling - that one agency, Cranbourne Community House MBCP, sent back their unfilled-in survey stating “Can’t see where this is any help to you” (PADV, 2004:165).

\textsuperscript{135} As I described in chapter 3 regarding the coding of interviewees, the first letter represents the sex of the speaker, the second represents the role they perform; M for manager, F for facilitator.

\textsuperscript{136} For convention I use this punctuation only to signify a pause, not to signify that speech has been excluded and the comments edited.
It would appear that the focus here is on individual men in isolation from societal influences. There is no reference here to the structural frameworks of patriarchy and privilege. As Johnson (1997) argued, violence against women is more than something that individuals do; it is “...behaviour that reflects the oppressive patriarchal relations that exist between men and women” (1997:95). Thus, it would appear that a somewhat simplistic interpretation of feminist analyses from a selection of respondents leaves the focus on the stand-alone individual man, rather than embedded within the broader patriarchal discourse that emanates from feminist origins. That said, responses varied from the examples and flavours presented above to a much more considered and reflective embracing of the structural foundations that feminism has set out to shake.

MM4. There’s a broad acknowledgement and recognition that the issues that we’re dealing with (men’s violence and abuse in the family) are structurally entrenched through patriarchy and the corresponding acting out of men’s dominance within society.

MM2. I think that the point here Pete is that there are bigger variables than just the focus on a bloke’s behaviour towards his partner or particularly his kids. Our focus and the way we work with these men in this way asks them to consider where and how this sort of behaviour is learned. That means that there’s a considerable expanding of the behaviour from the micro sense of where it seemed to go pear-shaped for him (in the family) to engage the blokes’ to think about the macro...what is male privilege...why do men get or gain some sort of privilege in the bigger world...what’s that all about? There are structural concerns here...we can work with one man, but what about the external structural frameworks that replicate and reinforce ‘the rule of men’...male domination.

This last response appears to project a rounded appreciation of the location of a man’s behaviour across the broad paradigms of micro / macro influences upon that stated behaviour. The majority of sector workers and authors would publicly state that the primary objective and focus of men’s behaviour change groups is safety of women and children (Bennet & Williams, 1998:1; Woodbridge, 2000; Castelino

137 I will discuss this point in more depth in the next section.
138 My position is that the sole purpose of this work is the safety of women and children. Any other outcomes – many of which I regard as very important and positive – are an adjunct.
& Compton, 2003; Howard, 2005:48). However, in their study of a Victorian MBCP, Richards, MacLachlan & Scott (2004) described the focus of men’s behaviour change programs as being “…on the abuser assuming responsibility for his abusive behaviours, developing non-oppressive attitudes to women, and learning ways to manage and reduce angry and violent behaviours” (2004:2). Similarly, the website of the Victorian peak body, NTV, states that the “…specific focus is work with men to assist them to change and end their violent behaviour”\(^\text{139}\). Interestingly, neither of these positions necessarily correlates with, nor do they mention, safety?

It would be pertinent to consider how the issue of interpreting and then instituting safety has changed over the years. Initially the concept of safety applied to women’s capacity to escape or flee from the violence to which she was being subjected. Women’s shelters and refuges were founded on the philosophy that there needed to be somewhere that women and children could go in order to distance themselves from the man’s violence, or if they were experiencing “…marital difficulties” (Walker, 1990:22). They were generally operating within the framework of a policy that minimised and isolated contact with men and, in particular, did not allow men into refuges (Hearn, 1998:194). Agencies operating from this philosophical position would usually advocate separation, for the woman’s safety, as women and children could not be safe unless they were removed from the source of the problem – the man (Chung, 1999; Shaw & Pye, 1995).

Sector workers and advocates appear to have shifted their location of safety to give considerable focus to women’s experiences of whether they feel safe in their...
relationship. While refuge and shelter remain an option\textsuperscript{140}, considerable endeavours have been put into supporting women to a place where they feel empowered to make their own decisions about their safety and that of their children. The sector talks of ‘safety plans’, part of which may include evacuation, that essentially amount to a set of steps to take in response to escalating abuse or imminent violence, and for the woman to work towards a more concrete decision about the future of the relationship (Davies, Lyon & Monti-Catania: 1998). Some of the issues addressed would include

\begin{itemize}
\item Provision of information such as knowing how to contact a refuge or the police; precautions to escape the scene such as spare car keys and some money; having personal support through a friend or family member; involving the courts through obtaining an intervention order.
\item Supporting the woman to realise that she is not responsible for the violence.
\item Working with the woman to help her through the effects of the abuse. This may take the form of individual counselling or supportive group work.
\item Supporting her through any legal and criminal proceedings.
\item Exploring with her the very real possibility of separation, temporary or permanent, and what that would mean for her and her children (Shaw, Bouris & Pye, 1999:240).
\end{itemize}

It would seem that there has been a shift from the sole position of escaping the home, to the consideration of other options as identified above. This position has been influenced through a greater honouring of many women’s preferred choice; that the relationship continue, but that the violence ends (Bagshaw et al., 1999). Behaviour change program intervention with men, while one of many options available, cannot guarantee safety, and a concern identified by feminist activists was echoed in early research (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988) that women’s partner’s

\textsuperscript{140} As they must.
participation in ‘perpetrator counselling’ was the most influencing motivation in her decision to return to the relationship. It may well be however, as Laing (2002:23) suggested, that “…for some women, the man’s participation in a program may provide a way for her to leave the relationship safely”\(^{141}\).

Within the discourse of safety, workers speak of accountability to women’s experience and ‘limited confidentiality’ for the man entering the program\(^ {142}\). Critics of MBCPs have argued that they are not only unsafe, but partners may be placed at further risk. For example, as identified above, it could be asked to what extent a man’s involvement in a program encourages a woman to continue her relationship in a high risk situation as compared to accessing safer options (Laing, 2002)? Woodbridge (2000) suggested that just as some programs demand of men that they demonstrate that they are safe, perhaps the responsibility should be on providers of programs to demonstrate that their programs are safe? However, despite the discursive positioning, safety cannot be guaranteed as the following comments from facilitators’ demonstrate.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{MM6} \hspace{1cm} We can only work with what we’ve got. While partner contact - according to working under the standards - is mandatory it won’t guarantee safety. The only way to guarantee safety is to lock him up…and then one day he’ll get out…more angry.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textbf{MF1}. \hspace{1cm} Partner contact, limited confidentiality, accountability to women’s experience all contribute to a framework of safety but at the end of the day no program can guarantee safety. We try and link in with appropriate support services but there’s only so much that can be done. Behaviour change groups aren’t the sole solution\(^ {143}\).
\end{quote}

The issue of safety appears to be problematic as per these responses, and there is little ambiguity in the second statement that “…\textit{no program can guarantee safety}”. It

\(^{141}\) It is important to acknowledge the tension here in that while the primary aim of a program is safety, safety cannot be guaranteed.

\(^{142}\) For a critique of some of the sector’s responses to safety issues see Castelino & Compton (2003).

\(^{143}\) For me this then raises the question as to how the primary objective of women’s safety is framed in terms of men’s programs.
is useful to consider the location of safety in the context of the intervention being regarded as therapeutic in nature. Many within the sector have taken great care not to identify men’s behaviour change programs as counselling or as therapy. The language of the dominant discourse favours terminology such as socio / educational, cognitive / behavioural, educational or systemic to distance intervention from a counselling / therapeutic framework.

**MM3.**  They’re basically cognitive-behaviourally based, feminist informed educational groups underpinned by safety considerations. I wouldn’t use the word counselling and they’re certainly not group therapy…but you couldn’t escape from the fact that there’s an element of therapeutic engagement.

**MM5.**  The primary focus is on education and thinking about behaviour I guess. Getting men to realise and understand that their violence and abuse is about using power and control over their partners. Inviting blokes to consider alternative ways of relating.

The above responses appear to be in tension with research into the Victorian sector which potentially muddies these waters. In an overview of services surveyed (PADV, 2004), programs claimed to be informed by many diverse approaches including narrative therapy, gestalt therapy, reality therapy, psychodynamics, solutions-focused therapy and family therapy (2004:161-5). As programs also use the language of refuge workers – such as patriarchal beliefs, male privilege, power and control, cycle of violence - tensions appear to abound here in a collision of discourses, as there would appear to be confusion over what constitutes therapy and what constitutes education. The peak body, NTV, had an each-way bet - and defers to the state as well - in informing workers that they “…need to wear the two hats of police person and counsellor” (V-NET, 1995:1.7.1). It would seem, as Francis

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144 Not safety?
145 It might be pertinent to consider that if the focus is on education, why doesn’t the sector refer to critical pedagogy?
146 Again, it would be thought that the primary focus should be on “…inviting blokes to consider alternative ways of (keeping their partners safe)”.  
148 My emphasis.
and Tsang (1997) suggested, that the “...(l)anguage that frames power and control as interpersonal issues and foci for therapy and education (has the potential to) leave the political supports for male dominance unexamined” (1997:211).

It would appear that intervention is selectively aimed at (inter)personal change rather than change at the structural level, with the outcome being that the feminist agenda has been somewhat depoliticised. What has been historically argued by feminism to be “…a political problem requiring structural change is reconstructed into an interpersonal problem requiring appropriate therapeutic technique” (Francis & Tsang, 1997:213). In many ways the therapeutic component of programs contradicts the voice of the educational and, certainly, the feminist political framework. It would seem well worth reflecting on whether this is a structural problem or an example of ‘bad practice’, and whether it is possible to escape this criticism149. While the majority of providers of MBCPs and women’s services agree that violence and abuse is not caused by anger, low self-esteem, stress, alcohol etc, for many men this is their individual understanding of their behaviour, and possibly the only immediate entry point into their personal framework of belief systems.

In working with men who use violence and abuse in the family, workers are effectively trying to engage the man in reassessing and changing his social foundations and beliefs. Not to thoroughly challenge a man’s violence is to not complete a process that his partner, children and society need completed so as to enhance their safety. However, to strip away the man’s various defenses without supporting him through that substantial change is also to not complete a process that will, at the end of the day, also have a bearing on safety. It is with this point in mind

149 Or perhaps, as Goldner (2001) suggested, how to work with it.
that most facilitators would acknowledge that groups are generally regarded as inclusive of a ‘therapeutic component’.

MF1. The key issue for me is the engaging of the fellow. He sees it as an anger issue for example. It’s in that dynamic that the real work takes place and the greater chances of moving towards non-violence takes place. For that to happen I’ll use every trick in the book to get him on side...and to keep him there. I don’t think that I’d call it counselling as such, but that’s where he’s at. And when he does fall over.... the therapeutic dynamic of the group provides the space for exploration.

MM3. I think that this is a blown-up issue. We don’t offer therapy; we use the structured space and eventual safeness of the group (for the man) to challenge men about their behaviour. We want to change that behaviour and if that’s painful for the man – as of course it usually is - we can support him through that change. That’s the ‘therapy’.

FM1. Well...a very good intervention is adjunct individual counselling to further work on the issues that the group raises. There’s a fair bit of counselling involved though in the group itself. It is a group therapy space...particularly in the later groups where there’s a lot more honest reflection and more use of the group dynamic to challenge.

MM6. These are psycho educational, social learning interventions. There’s a need for the space to be supportive and there’s a need for a safe therapeutic dealing with issues as they come up.

MF7. I think that it’s deeply therapeutic. There’s not a lot of value in the ‘chalk and talk’ approach. They (group facilitators) feel powerful by doing that. Therapy is a consequence of the intervention.

There are contradictions in these responses, and a more useful forward point might suggest naming and learning to live with that tension. As previously mentioned, facilitators learn their trade in the fields of social work, psychology, counselling and community work where there is a focus on personal growth at a deeper level than superficial engagement. Program practitioners are participants in a contest over meaning while the professional discourse constructs and conditions social and personal issues, and promotes intervention strategies. Perhaps, as Kaufman (1992) suggested the real issue is not so much whether to work with violence inclusive of a therapeutic perspective, but to recognise and to name the behaviour as violence.
While acknowledging the inherent tensions from a feminist perspective, Bograd (1992) argued that

\(\text{(t)o resolve this dilemma, people often either reject therapeutic practice and frameworks to uphold feminist or political beliefs or deny the contributions of a political perspective in order to maintain the purity of the therapeutic vision. But both positions have their truths, and neither can stand alone. Instead we must explore how understanding of gendered patterns of violence and control can be enriched by clinical insights, and how therapeutic practices can be deepened by political and social wisdom (1992:247).}\)

In contrast, McGregor (1990) contended that there are considerable concerns that counselling and therapeutic interventions, when used as an alternative to the law, undermine the intention of the law. Breckenridge and Laing (1999) argued that

\(\text{(b)ecause men control power, property, jobs, and money in society it is not surprising that wife assault, which is a male crime, should be so resistant to reform. Nor is it surprising that the crime is misinterpreted, misnamed as a problem rather than a crime, and that therapeutic help is offered to perpetrators rather than the appropriate legal response with its accompanying shame, humiliation and disruption of men’s lives (1999:243).}\)

Not all violence is criminal, and there has been on-going engagement with this issue of definition. More conventional legal responses to other crimes of violence may sometimes include rehabilitation programs that may include counselling, but this is only as a post-sentencing option. This could be regarded as the most appropriate response to men’s family violence; that they are used as an adjunct to a criminal justice response, but not as an alternative (Castelino & Compton, 2003). That said, it would appear that acknowledgement of a ‘feminist analysis’ refers more to the work with individual men. Thus, in attempting to answer a previous question, it would be difficult to escape the critique that feminist analyses appear to have been co-opted for this purpose.

As to whether this is a structural problem or an example of ‘bad practice’, as I previously mentioned, is an on-going issue. Facilitators appear to use whatever
means are at their disposal to first bring the man to the intervention through assessment, to contain the man in the group, to work on developing trust and enlightenment, and to eventually draw him to a position of awareness and understanding as to the genesis and consequences of his behaviour. Many workers acknowledge the incongruences in synthesising feminist structural analyses with therapy with individual men yet are prepared to continue with this for the reasons previously outlined: that is, that there is more often than not a prevailing line of thought that suggests that the end justifies the means. This suggests that as long as the man is brought to a place of acceptance of responsibility then any intervention is valid. I will continue with this point in the next section, as it is useful to consider how discourses of responsibility are promoted in light of the above.

Individual responsibility and change

Men’s violence against women is grounded in the careful calculations of benefits, costs and inherent risks entailed in using domination / force / control in certain situations but not in others (Stark, 2007:172). Programs that claim to be informed by feminist perspectives proclaim that men are individually responsible for their violence and abuse. The position taken by the peak body, NTV, is that

(t)he use of violence is a choice that each man is responsible for. Although a man may have been socialized to believe in his right to control women and children, or even trained to use violence, he can still choose to take responsibility and learn non-violent ways of relating (V-NET, 1995:9).

Men’s violence to their partners, under the umbrella and support of structural phenomena, is performed by individual men. To attempt to change men against violence is, as Edwards and Hearn (2004:44) suggested, both “...a personal and political matter...(as) whatever the social arena, changing men against violence to women and children involves changing the male self. (T)he responsibility for
violence lies with the individual man”. Other sources appear to position themselves in sympathy with this perspective. For example, information distributed by programs operating under the umbrella of the Western Australia model of Best Practice stated that there is a “…need to focus on shifting the perpetrator’s view of themselves as objects being acted upon by external forces to that of subjects making decisions about how they will respond”. In setting the foundation for what become known throughout the sector as the Duluth model, Pence and Paymar (1993) held individual men responsible for their behaviour while acknowledging that men’s violence against women was located in the socio-cultural context of patriarchy and privilege.

One of the underlying axioms upon which MBCPs are founded is that the individual man is responsible for his behaviour and, as it has been learnt, the man can learn new respectful non-violent ways of behaving. Interviewee responses were unambiguous in this position.

MF4. Violence and abuse is a choice and men could choose other options so they have to accept the responsibility for their actions.

FM1. Working from the premise that men are responsible is core to the work. It’s about inviting men to accept responsibility for their decisions and the consequences that obviously flow from that. They have to ‘own’ it. It’s not rocket science, you could hit or not hit... and you chose to hit.

The dominant discourse echoed above appears to suggest a free agent making conscious choices about behaviour and desired outcomes; that is, a rational and autonomous individual. Hearn (1998) suggested, however, that the breadth of men’s violence is considerably greater “…than a collection of individual actions” (1998:212). There appears to be a need to assess the location of the subject within

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150 Domestic Violence Prevention Unit (2000).
151 Given the importance of terminology that has been referred to throughout this paper, it is worth noting the tension inherent here in the Office of Women’s Policy using the language “domestic violence”.
the milieu of external influences and contexts as, as Pease (2004) proposed, “…rarely do the programs make explicit the model of the subject that underlies their belief in the capacity of men to change” (2004:55).

Workers frequently speak of men’s resistance or unwillingness to change. Collier (1998) argued that MBCPs appear to be premised on a top-down rationality (founded on the) assumption that it is possible to alter the effects of the historical and cultural specificity of the individual’s lived experience. (Thus, the focus placed on consciousness also)...underestimates the unconscious embedding of these patriarchal imperatives (1998: 173).

Many workers speak anecdotally of the difficulties inherent in encouraging men to take responsibility for their behaviour. It is worth deconstructing the cohort of men who use violence and abuse as “…the self-possessed, rational and emotionally self-sufficient individuals (that) the discourse (makes) them out to be” (McKendy, 1997:146) in order to more clearly comprehend the foundations for men’s resistance to change. As proposed by Hearn (1998), there are considerable complexities involved in the change process, and while individual men must accept responsibility for their own violence, programs must also confront “…a very broad combination of the social forces that sustain and act against men’s violence” (1998:200).

As mentioned in chapter one, men’s beliefs, actions and behaviours are tied to prescriptions of masculinities which are further woven into cultural subtexts. Fox (1999) analysed the experiences of men who were mandated to attend a MBCP within a prison setting. It was found that men were resistant to the program philosophy of accepting individual responsibility as this was in tension with the frameworks through which they experienced masculinity and how that was located within their socio / cultural value system. When men attempt to account for and to
engage with accepting responsibility for their behaviour, they are often giving both an explanation for the violence, as well as constructing a framework and rationale for the behaviour – often one outside their capacity to influence. Likewise, McKendy (1992), in an earlier observation of a MBCP, noted that men were required to remove from their personal narratives “…any references to the social relational contexts of their lives that might provide the grounds for excusing, justifying, denying or minimalising their abuse” (1992:61). The foundation upon which the premise of total ownership of behaviour and feelings sits is that of a “…self-possessed, rational, and emotionally self-sufficient” (McKendy, 1997:146) agent, and it appeared to be the role of program workers to invite the man to recognise and acknowledge himself as such. Men’s explanations and accounts of violence take place within the context of men’s power relations which are reflected and reproduced through these interactions. It would appear that many men are not able to recognise or identify themselves as having choices, and they see themselves at the mercy of external factors. This is demonstrated in language such as “I lost it” or “I don’t know what happened, suddenly I was there” that is frequently heard in group programs.

Group facilitators, as previously mentioned, come predominantly from the broad training fields of social work and psychology, and they piece together a program by adopting and adapting from therapeutic frameworks, domestic violence literature, their own experiences and politics, and linking them together with their understandings of the dominant discourses of men’s violence in the family. These discourses are predominantly learned within the sector through colleagues, conferences, workshops and publications where the same names are routinely
Facilitators’ actions could be seen as both enabled and constrained by these discourses. On one hand, they can be utilised in a manner that mandated the interventions that they were prepared to provide. Alternatively, facilitators were required to “…transpose the messy, unique and changing actualities of the men’s lives into the abstract forms, and categories in terms of which they could be made actionable as (the discourse of) wife abuse” (McKendy, 1997:146).

Hearn’s (1998) reflections here are pertinent, as it is important to question whether the intervention of a MBCP “…(further mystifies) men’s power by obscuring the extent to which men’s violence is embedded in the structure of patriarchal society” (1998:198). It appears that the complexities and inherent tensions within the change process are not fully explored if the site of intervention is left solely as an individual journey. While there is a demand to maintain responsibility for (the) violence with the individual man (it is equally vital that programs address) a very broad combination of the social forces that sustain and act against men’s violence:....in effect it is within the spectrum...of individual motivation and social structural parameters of dominant patriarchal systems of social relations that the man may or may not move away from violence (1998:200).

It is the individualising of men’s violence by not connecting the personal to the political that McKendy (1992) argued severely blunts “…the radical implications of the feminist analysis of violence as a normal feature of patriarchal society (because the men’s actions – the violence – are removed) from the concrete social relational contexts of their lives” (1992:77). A feminist analysis has focused extensively on the gender-based inequalities and oppression of women through male dominance, power, privilege, and status within both broader society, and the family (Lerner,

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152 It is worth considering Gondolf’s (2002) research which demonstrated that teachers were more effective facilitators in delivering a message than were social workers or psychologists. The therapist in me struggles with this. I think my dis-ease is concerned with potential bare rote learning as opposed to empathic engagement with understanding, reflection and, particularly, consequences.
Thus, while there may be variance in the individual motivations of individual perpetrators (Jenkins, 1990), violence against women is “…a pattern of behaviour that reflects the oppressive patriarchal relations that exist between men and women” (Johnson, 1997:95): that is, “…both individually willed and socially constructed” (Dankwort & Rausch, 2000:937).

Again, there is also perhaps something of a contradiction here in that while there is reasonably broad acceptance within the sector of the socio / cultural locations of men’s violence in the family, Blagg (2001) suggested that the majority of interventionist approaches used in working with men have been individualised. There is, to my mind, an inherent danger in providing explanations for a man’s violence that are based, for example, on individual pathology or poor communication skills when the greater structural locations are ignored or, at best, glossed over. Ashcraft (2000) enquired if working with men at an individual level suggests that the problem of men's violence lies solely with an identified group of men who are regarded as 'deviant', while the roles of social structures and attitudes - which sanction and perpetuate violence against women - are obscured. Eisikovits and Edelson (1989) echoed this sentiment in proposing that less threatening interventions for society and the state are to be found in “…target(ing) individuals and the family for (the) change (process) rather than the norms or values that are part of an intricate web of social order” (1989:407).

Men’s violence in the family is an act perpetrated by individual men against individual women, and this research argues nothing less than each man being held individually responsible for his own violence. Hearn (1998) argued though that each man’s violence is considerably “…more than a collection of individual
The frameworks of responsibility and choice “…can feed into a simple liberal individualism that is itself subject to critique…through the deconstruction of the autonomous, unified rational individual as well as…neglecting (the) structural location (of the violence)” (1998:212). Thus, it seems that greater attention needs to be given to the social and structural forces that weave men’s gendered subjectivities.

In an earlier analysis McKendy (1997) made the point that (w)ith the movement from the criminal to the treatment setting, the framing of the problem shifted from the relatively specific legal category of assault, to the spongier notion of “abuse”. However, the emphasis on “individual responsibility” was carried over in ways that effectively individualised and de-politicised the problem (1997:151).

As previously mentioned, it is problematic to ignore the location of men’s violence to women as “…both individually willed and socially constructed” (Dankwort & Rausch, 2000:937). It would seem to be pertinent to reflect briefly on the socially constructed category of men as a gender class. As a taken-for-granted category of the social and cultural world, this designation is somewhat problematic, as all men do not benefit equally from the patriarchal dividend (Connell, 1995). Men’s lives are enveloped in a system of dominance in which “…a minority of men dominate the majority of men” (Sabo & Gordon, 1995:10). Thus, a categorical approach to men - as a homogeneous cohort – can be used to obscure the privilege of some men153.

Recognising the diversity of masculinities is only an initial point of reflection, as it is imperative to examine the relations between them and, as Connell (1995) suggested, a focus on the class and gender relations between men necessarily demands keeping the analysis dynamic. Thus, when talking about and engaging with

153 And to obscure the systematic disadvantage of others. See, for example, Wadham (1997), for a discussion on the frequent absence of social division in the presentation of men’s health statistics.
the violences of ‘men’, it is important to acknowledge the differences between men, as well as overlapping similarities. Different men ‘do’ violence differently from other men, have different understandings and explanations for their violence than do other men, and differ in their meeting other men in their acceptance or otherwise of their violence. A man’s violence to his female partner reinforces who is different to the man; that she is the other, and this difference is substantiated, replicated and reinforced through his use of violence. Within this, men find an identity through relating to different manifestations of masculinities; a gendered identity that, as Connell (1995) suggested, has its genesis in the socio / cultural rather than the biological or the psychological. As there is the potential for men to become identified as a consequence of their violence, there is a particular challenge, as Hearn (1998) argued, “...to deconstruct ‘men’ whilst recognising both men’s power as a gender class and the physical embodiment of men as males when violent or potentially violent” (1998:216). Thus, in returning to the theme of a feminist analysis, as Healy (2000:41) proposed, critical discourse may appear to promote egalitarian practice, but in reality is both encouraging and reinforcing authoritarian power structures “…in so far as the ‘truth’ of the activist remains unquestionable”.

‘Acting’ sex roles and choice

Underlying the power and control framework of men’s violence towards women has been the intentionality of the behaviour. Watson (2001) proposed that a feminist analysis of men’s violence towards women that only considers patriarchy as the cause of that behaviour amounts to establishing a universal risk theory in that it takes conscious effort on the part of men to keep women in their place; thus “…(all) men therefore knowingly oppress (all) women” (2001:91). For Watson, this is further reinforced by the implication that “…women as a class are oppressed by men
as a class” (op cit.). It would seem somewhat problematic though to ascribe specific motivations to all men as a class. Most key agents and workers would acknowledge that men’s violence plays a pivotal part in the social control of women. Many men perpetrating violence are well aware of the correlation between this behaviour and the effect (control) that it has on their partners and others. There would seem to be a concern though in suggesting that feminist interpretations are as conspiratorial as proposing a universal risk theory based on an essentialist view of gender as “...although many men are clearly motivated to control women (via their use of violence) not all violent men share this goal” (Messerschmidt, 1993:45). Thus, care must be taken to separate the motivations of each individual man from his violent behaviours.154

The majority of programs in Victoria155 operate under the influence of a cognitive-behavioural paradigm that is founded on a social learning framework. Social learning theory in this context suggests that violent and abusive behaviour is learnt through watching and experiencing the same behaviour of others, particularly that which takes place in the family. Thus, one of the approaches taken is to attempt to get men to consider alternative ways of thinking, behaving and relating (Wexler, 1999)156. Patterns of thought – the cognitive – that justify and are used to sustain abusive behaviour are exposed and challenged, and the problematic behaviour is (ideally) replaced with more acceptable behaviour. In this way, interventions are acting predominantly from a deficit model, and the role of the intervention is to educate men who use violence and abuse about the destructive effects of their behaviour on their partners and children. A range of skill development - for

154 And also to avoid ‘straw man’ critiques of feminism, whose analyses are much more sophisticated than this.
155 And overseas also.
156 There would seem to be much to do. Biddulph (1995) blithely informed the reader that “...(d)omestic violence (is) as Australian as going to the beach” (1995:88).
example, communication, assertiveness, conflict resolution, and the ubiquitous anger management - were also incorporated into the intervention curriculum.

Cognitive behavioural models of learning rest primarily upon the relative isolation of the man from the processes of his differentiation in and by social structures. As Hearn (1998) argued, claims for this being a general theory of violence tutelage “…tend to rely on correlational analyses of the experiences and actions of (the man outside) the context of his social structure” (1998:26). What is under-theorised here in such correlational analyses is gender. The individual perpetrator is a gendered being – all learning is done within gendered paradigms. Roy (1982) enquired as to whether witnessing violence as a child - social learning - is relevant for understanding the violence of the perpetrator but not the violation of the victim? The process of socialization is thus “…imbued with gender and gendering (through) what is valued and not valued differentially by gender and for genders” (Hearn, 1998:27).

The fleshing out of bare social learning theory appears to have been the framework utilised by most program providers in Australia and overseas157, as a gender analysis that attempts to break down the influence of male sex role socialisation features strongly in most. Dankwort and Rausch (2000) argued that the popularity of a cognitive behavioural therapeutic framework has been supported by sympathy for the perspective that sex role socialisation is a significant cause of men’s violence towards women. While Adams (1988) has previously stated that cognitive behavioural approaches fail to incorporate gender / power issues - and are value-neutral, Robertson (1999) argued that it is “…clear that gender analyses can be

157 See, for example, Laing (2002) or Stark (2007).
easily integrated into cognitive behaviour programs” (1999:93)\textsuperscript{158}. This however, did not prevent the Domestic Violence Prevention Unit in Western Australia from positioning itself on the issue of gender construction by declaring that, for both perpetrators and victims, “…gender role socialisation....which promotes controlling behaviour by men in intimate relationships (will be examined)” (DVPU, 2000:8).

Gondolf (2002) alluded to a convergence of cognitive behavioural psychology and a broad-based feminist sympathetic analysis to “…establish what might be considered a gender-based cognitive-behavioural approach…to interrupt the violence and stop men’s abuse of women” (2002:12). As previously mentioned, many programs in Victoria blend a hybrid of cognitive behavioural therapeutic interventions and their own interpretation of a feminist analysis\textsuperscript{159}. However, it would appear to be problematic that feminist analyses have been woven into male sex role socialisation and into “…what counts as therapy and what counts as education” (Francis and Tsang, 1997:211). Oberin (2006) acknowledged that profeminist models of behaviour change have a focus on changing “…men’s attitudes towards sex role expectations; however, within a patriarchal society working with individual men who are already exhibiting controlling abusive behaviour seems to many feminists somewhat futile” (2006:8). Reconstructing male dominance and gender inequality as a causal relationship from male sex role socialisation leaves the political supports for male dominance unexamined and the violence and abuse reframed as interpersonal issues and foci for therapy (Shaloub-Kevorkian, 1997). Interviewees were invited to consider this site of contention, and responded with the following reflections.

Q. How / where does a feminist analysis sit with sex role theory?

\textsuperscript{158} I would suggest in this context that ‘feminist behavioural theory’ is in fact somewhat oxymoronic.

\textsuperscript{159} PADV 2004, 160-165.
Well...I agree that there’s possibly a bit of a contradiction but they’re all valid in trying to engage a man to consider other behaviour alternative.

Q. I agree with the contradiction. Sex role theory appears to paint the issue at hand as the man’s personal struggle with his own agendas and doesn’t appear to look at the bigger picture of male domination and its structural socio/cultural location.

MM6. Well...in its simple form...again, like I said there are some bits that might not quite mesh at the theoretical level that you’re talking about but you’ve got to work with what you’ve got and usually that’s where he’s at at that moment.

FF3. I think that you can acknowledge that there are useful ideas in how men construct their roles and how masculinity is played out in society – particularly the way that men who come to the group use it. I don’t think you can be too precious about then looking at that in relation to patriarchy. I mean the man sits in the social and cultural world doesn’t he.....so there is a lot of area to work with.

These responses tend to reinforce that, for many facilitators, their frameworks of intervention are grounded in an often incongruent meshing of diverse ideas and theories. Sex role theory assumes that both men and women are born tabula rasa onto which the roles expected of each sex are inscribed through the socialisation process. Within this framework, violence and abuse that is perpetrated by men is simply a consequence of the male sex role and, as Messerschmitt (1993) suggested, by failing to locate these roles in the context of institutional and structural power relations, sex role theory fails to consider the extent to which men “…are active agents in the social relations” (1993:28). It would appear somewhat problematic in that MBCPs that incorporate sex role theories appear to direct their focus more towards the costs to each individual man for ascribing to traditional masculinity than they do towards what Dankwort and Rausch (2000:952) referred to as “…the advantages and entitlements that men enjoy through patriarchy”. This appears to be borne out in facilitators’ engagement with this issue as identified in the following responses.
Q. In what way do men come to understand the influence of masculinity; that is, how are issues of ‘doing maleness’ addressed?

MM5. There’s a focus on asking men to reflect and consider in what ways they have been responsible or irresponsible in doing the sorts of things that we know men do...particularly younger men. Risk taking behaviour for example...being overly competitive. When we ask the men in the groups about this there’s hardly ever even one man who hasn’t been like that at some point, and they’ve suffered some sort of loss as a result.

FM1. There is a cost to ascribing to the role of the man. We usually role play that and invite men to consider how this has impacted upon their relationships and as a result they’re now picking up the pieces. So many really feel that regret...the ‘if only’s’!

MF4. One of the exercises that we get the group to do involves putting in two columns ideas and perspectives about what it means to be masculine and feminine. There’ll be the usual masculine stuff like men are competitive, aggressive, problem-solving, boss of the home, don’t look after their health etc and women are caring, submissive and nurturing and so on. Then we ask the men to consider how trying to be like this, to live up to socially constructed ideals of masculinity has resulted in most of them being where they are – here!

As these respondents articulate, it is useful for a man to reflect on masculinity. However, it seems that the focus in these comments is on how the dominant framework doesn’t work for men: rather, perhaps than asking how they in fact do benefit from these frameworks of domination and privilege? This is not a place that the ‘middle masculinity’\textsuperscript{160} political location of sex role theory likes to consider\textsuperscript{161}. Greig (2001), in noting that many men’s programs focused on the costs of subscribing to traditional masculinity, suggested that such a perspective fails to address men’s responsibilities “…in relation to the violence of oppressive social relations” (2001:9). While it is undoubtedly useful to explore non-violent masculinities, there are concerns that “…the structural violence of gender as a social construct that determines unequal and oppressive relations between people”

\textsuperscript{160} Middle masculinity encapsulates the area along the political continuum of masculinity that would include such components as men’s liberation/sex role theory and mythopoetical frameworks.

\textsuperscript{161} Indeed, middle masculinity struggles to examine “…men’s contradictory experiences of power” as “…there is no political or structural engagement” (French, 2007:51-2).
(2001:7) is not given sufficient attention. This point was reinforced in the following response from a female facilitator.

**FF3.** Men come to understand that the roles that they play through practicing masculinity are considerably negligent to their well-being and the well-being of others – particularly their partners and kids.

Perhaps they do come to some understanding of that negligence from their male roles? However, I believe that what is being missed here is the manner and means by which men benefit from adhering to those exact models. As a therapeutic practitioner it is often useful for me to enquire as to whether or not a particular framework of psychological reference is useful. Politically, though, it may be more than useful to enquire as to what we gain from the frameworks that we currently use; and why we continue to use them. Sex role theory has been considerably critiqued for its inadequacy in dealing with class differences, human agency, male domination and gendered power. Carrigan, Connell, and Lee (1987) made the point that men’s resistance to changing the sexual division of labour and the distribution of power is also ignored. Sex role theory thus appears somewhat inadequate in attempting to provide a suitable foundation for challenging men’s violence and abuse in the family. What is left unaddressed - though the use of sex role theory - are questions of inequality, structural gendered power and control frameworks between men and women, the concept of human agency, and the social class divisions and hierarchies that exist between men.

**One man = all men: homogeneity and typology**

There has been on-going debate regarding the continuum of men’s behaviours and the need to consider different interventions for different men: effectively, one size does not fit all and, indeed, that perspective may be counterproductive (Geffner, 162 My own therapeutic practice is informed by poststructuralism, Marxism, philosophy and critical gender studies as much as narrative therapy, psychoanalysis and cognitive behavioural therapy. 163 See for example Connell (1987), Messner (1997) or Pease (2002).
Day et al. (2009b) suggested that “…the viability and limitations of running homogenous...programs for a diversity of...offenders...is ideologically contentious and has profound implications for how perpetrator programs are conceptualised and delivered” (2009:220). Evidence that individual factors play a role in men’s choice of behaviour is easily found. Not everyone who grows up witnessing domestic violence becomes abusive, and not all users of controlling behaviour grew up witnessing domestic violence; most males exposed to a ‘culture of violence’ and male dominance do not perpetrate violence (Pease, 2002).

The question remains however whether and, if so, how the individual typology attributes that contribute to violence should be treated and whether programs can diversify to meet the needs of differing typology (Healy, Smith & O'Sullivan, 1998). Further, to what extent is incorporating frameworks of ‘diagnostic diversity’ a useful action within the FV sector as it appears to be within criminal justice settings.

Arguments that interventions should be tailored to accommodate individual psychological and personality characteristics are not new, and studies have focused on attempting to statistically cluster correlated characteristics. For example, Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) summarised three prevailing ‘types’ of perpetrators, while Jacobson and Gottman (1998) identified two major types of perpetrator based upon observed behaviour and psychological cues. For Dutton (1998), and Tweed and Dutton (1998), personality tests and clinical assessment pointed towards one prevailing type among program participants which they termed the ‘abusive personality’. White and Gondolf (2000) characterised and grouped men into profiles of personality pathology and dysfunction. However, research findings

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164 This is a key point within the sector. Sameness – be it biology or influences - does not necessarily correlate with on-going behaviour. And, again, behaviour is a choice. Thus, men can make other respectful non-violent choices if given options and consequences.

165 See, for example, Parhar, et al. (2008).
pointing to the need for perpetrator typologies have generally failed to alter treatment programs, both because feminist-based programs view the focus on psychological attributes of perpetrators unfavourably, and because researchers do not agree on what a typology of perpetrators might look like.

Mahon, Devaney and Lazenbatt (2009) suggested that in order for outcomes to be improved interventions need to address individual needs of group participants. This does not mean that workers should not consider the structural gender inequalities that contribute to the societal acceptance of men’s violence. What it does mean is that there is a need to recognise that men who use violence and abuse are not an homogenous cohort 166.

MM2. Well, it’s one size fits all. That’s the bottom line because of the way that men’s behaviour is viewed. There is no individual intervention based around individual requirements of the men. That’s not the sector’s thinking. The standards give details of clients’ suitability.

This response recognises that individual diversity amongst group participants is not considered, and it also makes reference to the standards manual’s role in providing clarity. As Day et al. (2009b) suggested, while it is not surprising that men’s stories can reveal a history of abusive experiences, and that while there is frequently a subset of men with multiple overlapping needs, there are very considerable differences that exist between men 167, and it is difficult if not almost impossible to “…describe in detail the typical offender” (2009:167).

166 For further reflections on this point, see Chung et al., 2004.
167 Indeed, a fundamental tenet of my approach to profeminism – one of the axioms upon which MBCP work is based - is the regarding of the diversities amongst men as being of greater significance than the similarities. See, for example, Connell (1995) or Pease (2002).
No useful consensus concerning psychological categories for men who use violent and abusive behaviours has emerged from the research community\(^{168}\) although it is perhaps prudent to consider Gondolf’s (2002) research which yielded an extremely varied picture of psychology. This indicated that 18 percent showed evidence of a severe mental disorder and pathology, 40 percent showed narcissistic personality traits; and avoidant/depressive traits were present in 22 percent of subjects (2002:179)\(^{169}\). It might be useful to consider these results in the light of Dutton’s (1998) earlier research which interpreted that violence and abuse of women was the result of psychopathology and, thus, there is “…serious doubt (cast) on the theory that all or most…violence against women is gender-motivated” (1998:27). Under the lens of scrutiny, however, the profile that Dutton identified is not psychiatric maladaptiveness, but \textit{a broad spectrum of behavioural and personality types very widely found in the general population}. As Dutton and Strachan (1987) acknowledged, these traits are more likely to be “…strongly attuned to aspects of the culture that direct and justify abuse” (1987:154) rather than the consequence of any imbalanced mental process – let alone that of a mental illness.

Stark (2007) proposed that what is identified here is in fact a normal pathology - a cluster of varying personality characteristics that are integral to a man’s choice to use abusive behaviours and control and dominate. While they come with pathological consequences - especially for women and children – they have their genesis in a normative construction of masculinity as opposed to any degree of mental defect\(^{170}\). As Stark (2007) suggested

\(^{168}\) See, for example, Day et al., (2009b).

\(^{169}\) N=100.

\(^{170}\) See also Gondolf (2002:97) who identified little evidence of an abusive personality typology. He found that “…the most common disorders (40%)…were narcissistic and antisocial” attitudes. The characteristic of narcissism suggests a delusional sense of entitlement that is often attributed to men who use abusive and controlling behaviours. “The substantial proportion of men with narcissistic
(c)lassifying perpetrators based on their personality types might help (some) clinicians target their services. (However) serious ethical questions are raised by treating traits like demandingness, manipulation, and control as personality problems once they are actualised in criminal strategies to dominate, hurt and isolate women (2007:69).

It might be pertinent to explore options for using typology to identify high-risk offenders for 1:1 counselling\(^{171}\), or alcohol / drug treatment, or extended interventions that would address psychological factors as well as provide education and socio / cultural broadness of behaviours. Respondents appeared to agree that there was an obligation to consider more diversity within an intervention to address and respond to the differing needs of men who present to a MBCP.

Q The dominant thinking underpinning groups is that these are learned behaviours that have their origins in male-dominated society and patriarchy, and that a socio / educational intervention is the most useful?

MM2. *It’s more complex than that. It would be good to be able to tailor an intervention to each man but that’s not going to happen. There’s just not the funds, nor the time, nor the workers to go round.*

MM5. *It’s not feasible or respectful - or professionally appropriate, to put all men in to one type of group...and teach them! There’s just too much difference and usually there are a range of issues that impact on how to get him to change his behaviour. There are some pretty damaged men in the groups.*

While the dominant discourse of the sector is that these are learned behaviours grounded within a patriarchal system and male privilege – a structural framework – it would seem that the alignment articulated by these comments is about tailoring an individual intervention for a(n) individual problem(s). Several authors\(^{172}\) have supported the need to address the cohort of insecure attachment issues amongst men

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\(^{171}\) To my mind the most useful intervention with a man in the short term is incorporating 1:1 counselling at the same time as he is attending a group program. This provides the opportunity to (i) keep safety uppermost and as a priority, (ii) deal with issues that arise from the group, and (iii) to provide the space to invite him to consider further the responsibilities that he needs to address as a consequence of his behaviour. Many of my colleagues would support this view.

\(^{172}\) See, for example, Sonkin and Dutton (2003), Bolen, (2005), Dutton and Corvo (2006).
in programs from a therapeutic position rather than a psycho / educational emphasis. Exploring these issues will lead to an understanding and a reconfiguring of the psychological dynamics that they claim have been driving these behaviours. Woodhead (in Day et al., 2009:137) pointed out that there is considerable knowledge within therapeutic group work practice about the importance of variables other than just content. She suggested that this knowledge is, on the whole, predominantly absent from behaviour change programs in Australia and, to her, this “...appears surprising at best, almost negligent at worst”. Similarly, most programs already integrate an ‘anger management’ component, which uses reflections and cognitive behavioural exercises designed to help men recognise the physiological signs of anger, and to then develop skills to reduce arousal and attempt to avoid violent behaviours. However, to re-visit Francis and Tsang (1997:212), a “...political problem requiring structural change is again re-constructed as an interpersonal problem requiring therapeutic...intervention”. Further, the orthodoxy of the sector, through the peak body, NTV, would suggest that there are many men with insecure attachment issues, and the vast majority of them do not choose to use violent behaviour. Thus, issues such as attachment cannot be used to “excus(e), condon(e) or minimis(e) a man’s behaviour on the basis of his own experiences (which) reinforces rather than challenges his (own) use of violence” (NTV, 2006:33).

Tensions abound here and, while I concur with the position as stated by the peak body, if the first priority is to confirm safety frameworks as holistically as is

173 Indeed, a MBCP would not be the most ideal space to authentically explore an issue like this.
174 Variables such as the importance of process, the skills of the facilitator or validating the experiences of the group participants in the here and now, for example.
175 I will discuss this in greater depth in the following chapter.
possible\textsuperscript{176}, and to do no further harm, then there would appear to be at least a moral obligation to assess and respond to all available variables and options to ascertain the best possible outcome.

**Constructing expertise: standards for intervention**

One of the most important considerations in working with men who perpetrate family violence and abuse is that of accountability of the intervention. While the vast majority of actors and stakeholders involved in service delivery, policy development, protocols, etcetera would strongly support and emphasise the need for men’s behaviour change programs to be accountable to women’s experiences of violence and abuse, there is diversity as to what this really means, and the methods and strategies through which this is implemented. Accountability and safety go hand-in-glove; a program that does not have accountable practices, that runs in isolation, or is not transparent in its intervention, runs considerably more risk of causing more danger and damage than it may address\textsuperscript{177}.

A point of initial reflection is to consider exactly what is meant by the often-used claim of accountability which must be "…central to the underpinning philosophy within which the program is set" (Woodbridge, 2000:9). The focus of behaviour change program intervention must be the safety of women and children, and to that end the intervention is “…accountable to women and children’s experience of suffering and change, or lack of it” (Hughes and Weiss, 1999:5). The family violence sector’s attempt to address the issue of accountability has led to the establishment of benchmarks for service provision. These benchmarks have come to

\textsuperscript{176} Again, it can’t be guaranteed.
\textsuperscript{177} See, for example, Costello (2006).
be manifest as embraced standards that formally document desirable practice. While the terminology is integrated throughout the standards of practice, there is no separate section that addresses the issue of accountability as a stand-alone concern as they “…imply, but do not make explicit, a succinct explanation and definition of accountability” (NTV, 2001:23). Thus, it would appear timely to revisit the standpoint and position of the standards of practice in light of their importance to the stated philosophies of accountability and transparency.

Members of the precursor to NTV, V-NET, developed local standards of practice in 1995 for working with men who use violence and abuse in the family. Originally the ‘standards manual’ was envisaged as “…an internal policy and procedures document for V-NET members only” (V-NET, 1995). This publication was titled Stopping men’s violence in the family: a manual for running men’s groups. Volume 1, Context and standards. As is indicated, there was the intention to add additional volumes as sector knowledge and research allowed. A previous attempt to revise the standards in 2000, incorporating a State-wide 3 day conference titled “Men, Violence and Change” was limited to a not-for-distribution discussion paper, as government policy on MBCPs was not sufficiently advanced. As I have alluded to throughout this thesis, during the gestation of this research a revised standards manual, “Men’s Behaviour Change Group Work: A Manual for Quality Practice”, has been released (NTV, 2006).

As previously mentioned, the web site of NTV promotes “…stopping men’s violence in the family”. The previous standards manual used the same language as part of its title. However, it is clear, despite the unstated well-intentioned

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178 Programs funded under the Department of Human Services umbrella agree to implement and uphold the minimum standards. See NTV, (2006:29-30).
presumption, that this does not necessarily correspond to increasing the safety of women. It is perhaps equally problematic in using the terminology ‘the family’ as there is the suggestion that there is only one type of family, thus ignoring differing make-ups and dynamics. Further, the terminology “…running men’s groups” could again be seen as somewhat problematic in the context of the desired outcome. While this statement is not untrue, “running men’s groups” does not necessarily equate with stopping men’s violence.

Most practitioners and service providers appear to be in sympathy with the use of standards of practice as being important in developing a framework of accountability to the experience of women and children. However, it would appear that the sector is not homogeneous in its thinking. There are diverse views that range from an acknowledgment of the need for transparent consistency, through to facilitators’ feelings of being restricted and constrained in their practice; and often practitioners are in tension with this diversity. The following comments reflect on the above-stated position of support and appreciation of their use.

**FF2.** I think their greater value lies in ensuring consistency across the sector and (it) promotes greater accountability and transparency. The standards as they are now represent the collective thinking of a lot of experience in the whole field. You can pick it up and get a clear understanding of what happens in the groups and what drives the work.

**MF1.** There’s no doubt from our (agency) perspective that they’re useful and valuable particularly as a checklist for example. I guess the area of contention for me is the focus on structure and content. (That is,) they have nothing to say about process and most of us would be in agreement that it’s in the process that most of the real work’s done.

**MM3.** They lay a foundation of program accountability, particularly to the experiences of women. Because we’re working closely with

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179 The most recent re-writing of the standards attempted to address this to a degree, incorporating in to the definition of family “…marriage or blood ties, de facto relationships or…”(‘step’ relationships) (NTV, 2006:25). The absence of same-sex relationships in this discussion is glaring.
women’s services the standards can provide a complete picture of the focus of the groups.

In sympathy with these quotes, Gondolf (1992) also made a similar point, suggesting that by outlining the framework of knowledge and contents of programs, standards of practice are a source of ‘consumer education’ that can be relatively easily disseminated.

Working with men who use violence and abuse in the family grew out of refuge and shelter intervention with women. Some workers within the refuge movement and others in the community began requesting specific interventions for men to assist them to stop being violent. Behaviour change programs for men “…first began to appear in the United States and England around 1977, and in Australia around the mid 1980s” (NTV, 2001:5), and there is an acknowledgement of the expertise that is brought by these advocates for women’s safety. Oberin (2006) suggested that “…it could be argued that they have flourished to the extent that they are now firmly ensconced as a legitimate part of government and community sponsored intervention into domestic violence” (2006:1). That is, that they are now a considerable component of the dominant discourse. It could also be argued that they have flourished to the extent that they are much ensconced in the forefront of women’s services awareness as a legitimate intervention. Accessible transparent standards of practice have certainly been one means of attempts to lay the foundations through which differing sector agents are able to focus on a shared objective of safety while holding men responsible for their behaviour. Workers with men sharing a ‘common ground’ with the women’s sector was identified in the following responses from interviewees.

MM3. Relationships with women’s services are probably at an all time high because we all agree that we’re working for the same outcome.
MM6. I think that the women’s sector has shifted considerably. It would have been unheard of not too long ago for them to be positive and supportive about working with men. It just didn’t sit with their politics. I think the big thing is that the suspicion we had for each other has given way to a common goal.

There are some tensions for me in these last responses which I consider to be overly simplistic. Is the implication here that women have shifted their position but men have not? While I acknowledge that there is perhaps less suspicion, and a greater stated desire - at least on the surface - to listen more to the voices of women, the political alignment of men’s and women’s services does not allow for a direct overlapping of political templates and positions. For example, and as I have previously discussed, the focus on what ‘safety’ means appears to have shifted from fleeing from the home and the man’s violence, to women’s experience of whether or not they feel safe in their relationship. However, a focus on safety differs from an ambition to stop the man’s violence; thus, the aspirations of a “common goal” might be drawing a long bow. While factions of women’s services are indeed more open to working with men (Taylor, 2000; Woodbridge, 2000)¹⁸⁰, suspicion continues however, particularly with regards to the location of the intervention – that is, working with individual men vis-à-vis addressing the structural frameworks of patriarchy and privilege, and other questions concerning accountability, evaluation, and, particularly, programs being used as a ‘soft’ sentencing option within the criminal justice system (Laing, 2002:1).

¹⁸⁰ Perhaps this alignment is greater than my cynicism allows? For example, Berry St and The Northern Family Violence Service articulated their view about working with men in saying that NTV's publications “...(talk) in my language, (say) things that I agree with or things I hadn’t thought of but realise make a lot of sense. Who would have ever thought that women’s services would be working alongside, doing the same work as, forming partnerships and training with men’s services?...We recognise that MBCPs are not the answer to the issue of men’s violence, or at least they are not the complete answer. (However) (what) does give me and others in the sector...reason to believe that progress is being made and that things are moving in the right direction is that there is a body that oversees, provides direction, support and a focal point for men’s services. No To Violence is almost like ‘one of the girls’ it has a clear, articulated position, it has a sound philosophy based on practice and research wisdom...” (Rorke, 2009:18).
Not all practitioners of MBCPs would agree that the position taken by the peak body, NTV, in aligning itself with women’s services, is beneficial or appropriate. As the following quotes demonstrate, MBCP workers often speak of a sense that the peak body has moved too far to the political left, and this has resulted in a degree of servility to the demands of women’s services as the gatekeepers of family violence intervention.

MF7.  There’s a lot of...not kowtowing...but there’s a lot of maybe obsequiousness to the women’s movement...but I guess I would query whether a lot of the women’s movement people really know what we do...and what a men’s group really looks like?

MM2.  There’s way too much giving up to women’s services. The sector and NTV in particular has moved far too far to the left, we now have answer to women’s services and to kiss their arse and get their permission and approval to do anything. There’s no reason why this work can’t be done by good men who have an understanding of the context and an awareness of how to work with men. NTV’s become a puppet to women’s services and fawns up to it and basks in their adoration. But don’t quote me!

There is little ambiguity in both these responses; and a degree of tension with NTVs’ political alignment appears to remain as an undercurrent throughout discussions with workers in MBCPs. As van Dijk (1998) suggested, through this alignment participants claim authority over sites of multiple contestations that involve differing discourses and occupy varying discursive positions along a political continuum. To return to the discussion of the standards, however, it would generally be agreed that working with men in a MBCP requires specific training and knowledge so as not to replicate, reinforce, and minimise violence, nor to collude with the perpetrator of that behaviour. While standards help to articulate the authenticity of this specialised intervention, agents are legitimating the professional discourse to which they stake their claim.

MM2.  Well...you wouldn’t want just anyone doing it. The standards give a bottom line of professional credibility because
there’s all sorts of dangers if it was the case that anyone was doing this work. We’ve got a reputation to protect which we’ve worked very hard for. I think we’re entitled to that professional recognition. There’s also a lot of politics here you know…political positioning…funding…

FF3. I’d agree that anyone working in this field needs specific and specialised training. It’s a requirement to work in the sector. If there’s a concern that (agency) has it’s that it’s always in-house with the same people all the time. Some new ideas would be useful

MF4. We’ve worked particularly hard to get credibility. The sector deserves that. It’s not about status; it’s about the work, funding, credibility, believing in the position that the sector takes.

FM1. I think that we’d need to be clear to all that facilitation should only be done by experienced workers…and you have to be a member (of NTV). Having said that though I’d guess that you’re looking at the old issue of how to get experience. There’s a lot of what you’d call sector specific information; subtleties…politics…ways of interacting and working at many levels that simply isn’t available elsewhere.

Q. And not everyone agrees with those subtleties and specifics?

FM1. No. There are people that I won’t refer to because I don’t believe that they’re as respectful as I would want. They point the finger of scorn at men and work from a base of shame which doesn’t help…or they’re too militant and judgemental in their engagement…too left (politically)...too hard-line. NTV’s the same.

Again, there is diversity within these responses. MM2 speaks of an “…(entitlement) to…professional recognition” through that training that allows his voice to speak with authority: that is, there is legitimacy in upholding and stating the dominant discourse. Achieving this status is “…a requirement to work in the sector” (FF3).

FM1 speaks of membership to that guild; a status that is only available to certain people under strict criteria; a credibility that is deserved, as MF4 states. However, FM1 alludes again to the perceived political “hard-line” alignment of the peak body and, in this instance, draws fellow members into this positioning.

181 This is an interesting aside which I regret not fleshing out further at the time.
The sector has tightened membership requirements and developed mandatory practitioner qualifications considerably over the last decade, and many have contributed to that development. The words of these participants reflect their input, benchmark of service, guild membership to talk with authority about these issues, and professional standing\textsuperscript{182}. Reflecting on Foucault’s four-part notion of the formation of discourses, the impacts on establishing jurisdiction, claims for advocacy and expertise, and progressive professional practice elucidates that there are specific (acceptable) procedures that produce discourses and that there are “…certain statements…but not others (that) occur at particular times, places and institutional locations” (Fairclough, 1992:40). This enables particular points to be articulated through the tome of sector expectation while other positions and claims are dismissed (Featherstone and Fawcett, 1995:27). Thus, the voices of the accredited members of the guild are endowed with sector authenticity in speaking for, and to, their claims for advocacy and expertise. This also silences dissenting voices, as “...you wouldn’t want just anyone doing it”.

Part of the script of being a good professional worker is to have ideals that complement the considerations and pontifications of the main components of professional morale deliberation. As collective aspirations of the territory and ownership of the guild, professional ideals and knowledge have an external normative function that is thrust upon individual workers; however, endorsing these values and standpoints can only come from within. There is a dual function of professional ideals and expertise. They are pursued by the guild and constitute the

\textsuperscript{182} The Victorian sector, through the peak body NTV and Swinburne University, has developed the Graduate Certificate of Social Science (Male Family Violence Group Facilitation). It is the only known formal qualification for working with men at this level. It is delivered by staff from the University as well as trained senior practitioners, facilitators and program managers from the male family violence prevention sector under the NTV umbrella. All those involved in the delivery of this training are also required to have formal training and assessment qualifications.
collective group professional identity, but they also need to be endorsed by individual members in order to identify with the greater collectivity. In considering the “history of problematisations”, Foucault (2007:141) drew attention to the way that things become problems, and in response the way that certain behaviours are identified and staked as the territory of a certain professional group. Particular realms of intervention, each associated with distinct domains of knowledge, authority and expertise are created along disciplinary lines that exercise power. Expert knowledge performs a dual function; controlling who can speak with authority about a particular issue but, perhaps more importantly for the guild, identifying which voice(s) will be disregarded and dismissed as not recognised as relevant (Seymour, 2009:1). As Foucault reinforced, in this jockeying for authority and ownership of expertise, “...for knowledge to function as knowledge it must exercise power” (2007:71).

While the sector might claim to follow a generic script – the standards of practice - there are clear differences. As previously mentioned, Bourdieu (1991) identified that the idiosyncratic language and frameworks that pertain to a specific sector are expressions of power that actors need to take on board in order to ascertain – and assert - their competency over others. Thus

(t)he integration into a...linguistic community, (that is) a product of...political domination...endlessly reproduced by institutions...(that are) imposing universal recognition of the dominant language, is the condition for...(establishing) relations of linguistic domination (1991:46).

As I discussed in chapter five, Bourdieu linked these social relations and language through symbolic power and habitus (Carmel, 1996). The symbolic capital invested in this consequently accords and legitimates the actor to speak with the voice and position of status and authority.
The standards came about because we wanted some uniformity and transparent understanding about what was appropriate and what wasn’t. There’s a lot of solidly grounded practice perspectives, advice and support within them. They’re a reference work on their own...one that we can rely on.

Bourdieu’s (1991) statement above is reflected in this facilitator’s comment, which is suggesting that from the position of regarding the standards as “a reference...on their own”, this worker can hold a vantage point of legitimacy and authority: and, I would suggest, confidence in articulating that position – as, “we can rely on (it)”. As Mahar, Harker & Wilkes (1990:13) pointed out, the actor has the symbolic power to represent to the collective other the undisputed “…official version of the social world”. Accordingly, while involved agents appear to agree that there are unique and specific tools and techniques of expression and intervention – an exclusive language – there would also appear to be many dialects that covertly align agents, often in tension which each other. And competing discourses, and multiplicities of truth within that, struggle and compete for hegemony.

Across the broad sector, both nationally and internationally, the general feeling is that the NTV standards for facilitating MBCPs for men who use violence and abuse in the family are highly regarded. While it would be fair to suggest that the majority of workers agree with the need for standards of practice, there are criticisms within the literature of aspects of their adherence to implementation. Some practitioners (see Goldman, 1991; Geffner, 1995; Goldner, 2001) have strongly critiqued rigid adherence to standards on the grounds that their right to practice according to preferred theories and training is restricted. Goldner (2001), for example, advocated for “…multiple viewpoints and models of treatment…that could mutually enrich each other instead (of)...creating a polarizing context of forced choices” (2001:97).
Some of these tensions that I alluded to earlier in this section are reflected in the following responses.

**MF1.** They’re too prescriptive end of story! I think some demands are pedantic. I just don’t have time to follow through with every detail. I’m sympathetic but....They spend a lot of time on the content but as you know it’s not content but process that engages and changes men. It’s profoundly frustrating. I don’t tell them (NTV) everything I do!

**MM5.** The standards are more than useful but I think the bottom line is there’s an overly simplistic view of family violence intervention in through the standards. Working with men demands greater complexity than seems to be publicly permissible to say. Otherwise you’re kind of outing and held out to dry....on your own.

**MM2.** The standards are good work! Being forced in to anally-retentative compliance is stupid, doesn’t work in my opinion, and impacts on otherwise robust work because you’re too busy ticking boxes. Sometimes it’s more a case of don’t ask, don’t tell.

**MF7.** It’s just too complicated a document and it needs to be much simpler. They proposed turning good practice guidelines in to standards...I think that’s just sticking your head up your arse and ignoring reality.

Goldner’s (2001) words echo through these responses. For many workers it appears that tacit recognition of the standards is acknowledged in the public space, but privately they appear to often embrace a flavour of “just get on with it”.

In terms of setting the professional discourse, the standards have been mandated as the means by which power is held and controlled by the incumbents. Thus, they are able to control and ‘corner the market’ as the following responses indicate.

**MM2.** Well...if you’re not under the umbrella you don’t get the referrals do you?

**MF1.** There’s a tension here in that we’re working in an area permeated with power and control issues and the way that we work is becoming so tightly regulated and controlled! It’s always going to be our way or the highway.

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183 See NTV Notes, November, 2010:3.
184 NTV auspices the Men’s Referral Service which only refers clients to agencies that are members of NTV, and who agree to implement the NTV standards of practice.
FF2. *It is a relatively small sector you know so you’re bound to see the same faces pop up at each meeting or training. I think the sector likes to own its own space.*

FF3. *I think that there’s a curious contradiction in that the work is becoming increasingly controlled and that control is being exerted by NTV. Being accountable to the experiences of women and children is one thing, but there’s a feeling now that it’s like being at school and taking your work up to teacher.*

MM2. *If the line isn’t toed then the consequences are potentially considerable. You won’t get the referrals, you’ll be regarded as a maverick and placed under house surveillance....though I suspect certain mavericks are tolerated*. There’s not the scope to work uninhibited with a simple focus on the work.

MF7. *I think that one of the problems of NTV is that they’ve gone back to the same pool of people over and over again so they’re getting...a combined group position that is reinforced by going back to the same group of people...which is not necessarily a reflection of where the workers are in the field at all. It’s a reflection of where a very small sub-section of workers are!*

There is a certain tone of ambivalence that permeates these responses. Workers appear to be suggesting that the control of the dominant discourse and agenda is in the hands of a few. While most practitioners would sit in the same political tree as the peak body, NTV, they may not necessarily share the same branch. There often appears to be a feeling of restriction and somewhat rigid compliance as the sector has developed its reporting and accountability frameworks. Costello (2006) noted four years ago that while DHS funds many of the MBCPs in Victoria, there was no monitoring of agency’s adherence, and no consequences for failing to comply with the peak body’s (NTV) guidelines. She suggested that it seemed ironic that other services which work with women and child victims of men’s violence are compelled by DHS to provide exhaustive quarterly statistics as part of their service agreements, while MBCPs are not. While the state government can be seen to be ‘doing something’ about male violence with these programs, if evaluation can be

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185 Again, an aside that I regret not fleshing out further at the time.
186 Such as Family Support and the Supported Accommodation Assistance Programs (SAAP), for example.
avoided their effectiveness is not challenged. Again, to paraphrase Healy (2000:41), this presents the often witnessed paradoxical situation whereby critical discourse may appear on one hand to be promoting egalitarian practice, but in fact is encouraging and reinforcing the status quo of authoritarian power structures as the ‘truth’ of the dominant hegemony and the collective ‘guild voice’ remains unquestionable.

Agency compliance with the standards has been problematic and difficult to enforce - although on the other hand mandating adherence to standards may be responded to with somewhat superficial compliance. Monitoring has previously not occurred for two reasons. First, there has been a lack of monitoring frameworks and procedures and, second, there has been a lack of resources available to put them into place even if these frameworks existed. Previously, agencies simply had to agree to uphold compliance with the standards. However, there appeared to be broad agreement that what did appear to be concerning is that, as with all self-surveillance, such a degree of “…voluntary industry self-regulation (is) not sufficient to ensure the high levels of accountability required for these programs” (NTV Forum, 2001:30).

The revised standards of practice (NTV, 2006) have attempted to address this concern stating that “…(c)ompliance with the minimum standards will be actively monitored on an annual basis, via a survey and Statutory Declaration” (2006:141). NTV recognised that “…programs are provided by different agencies…in…different settings…facilitated by professionals of diverse background, disciplines and theoretical positionings...(and) there are great disparities in the resources available (NTV, 2006:142). Thus, as the peak body acknowledges, each program is unique as
was demonstrated through the PADV comparative assessment of various providers of men’s behaviour change programs (PADV, 2004:161-165).

NTV (2006) justified the position that it has taken by stating that

(m)ost self-regulating...professional bodies in the health field use a process of self-monitoring and self-disclosure. Members sign a statement of intent to comply with the ethics and Standards of the profession, and it is assumed that they do so unless it is proven otherwise. (However)...it is imperative to take a more proactive stance than this...(and) there is a good case for actively monitoring (compliance)...and responding appropriately if (agencies do not comply) (2006:142).

The monitoring of agency compliance will take place through “...(surveying) providers annually about their implementation of the Minimum Standards. The survey sheet will be accompanied by a Statutory Declaration, which must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent)” (NTV, 2006:143). While it is commendable that the peak body has attempted to grapple with this difficult issue, there remain tensions here for me in the potential lack of transparency that this may perpetuate; that is, the potential to transverse this requirement. Agencies have a lot to lose through not being a point of referral\textsuperscript{187} and offering programs. Attached to programs are the status and kudos that comes with a developing field, not to mention funding that is invariably scarce at any level\textsuperscript{188}. While all involved stakeholders would like to ‘assume’ that there is across-the-board compliance, and that honesty and professional integrity will prevail in the monitoring process, agencies have their own agendas that potentially dominate their prioritising. Respondents were asked if surveys and statutory declarations represented sufficient accountability given the potential vagaries of self-reporting and the corresponding outcomes that hinge on ‘toeing the line’.

\textsuperscript{187} Via the Men’s Referral Service which only refers men to programs that operate under NTV’s code of practice and who agree to uphold the minimum standards.

\textsuperscript{188} Many facilitators and program managers admit privately that they re-assign funding according to what programs and therapeutic ventures they wish to commence or to keep running.
FM1. Well, we’ve got to toe the line now, although it’s hard to see how there will be full compliance across all programs. We still have the usual stuff of time and funding that makes the work so much more difficult...once a year now we’ll have to provide all this documentation on top of everything else.

MM3. It’s better than it was. Previously there was no monitoring other than just agreeing to implement the standards. This raises the bar and the sector, and particularly NTV, can be seen to be doing something about it. It’s probably open to interpretation to some degree I’d reckon, but it’s definitely an improvement. Plus...I’d like to think that I’m honest.

MM6. You know what it’s like Pete! We’ll still cut corners...not because there’s a ‘bugger it’ attitude, but because we’re just concerned with getting on with the job. Of course it’s open to exploitation. It’s only a fucking stat dec!

MF5. I think that most people in the sector can be trusted to report with accuracy and honesty. There’s professional reputations here: agency reputations.....

Professional reputations indeed: kudos and status, and funding as well. I sensed in speaking with respondents an ambivalence that seemed to come more generally from a place of extra demands placed on their time rather than from specific belligerence at being placed under increased external surveillance. Respondents generally agreed with the need to ensure that there was transparency and accountability in the monitoring of compliance, but were concerned about the increased workload in an already heavily time-taxed sector. That said, being “...open to interpretation / exploitation” and “...cut(ting) corners” tends to reinforce that self-reporting and self-surveys come with the considerable implication of not quite going far enough in not providing sufficient scrutiny. The following response left no ambiguity.

MM3. What would work is an external audit. Then there could be no arguments or accusations about in-house agendas and impropriety in particular. (It) (s)eems that programs are prepared to take the funding that’s given from the state government but aren’t

189 Though that was present. Professionals do not like being told how to ply their trade: and the vast majority would believe that they are more than qualified to speak and act in the manner that they practice.
prepared to embrace external accountability. It doesn’t go far enough.

While considering removing agency influence from a compliance audit there would be a corresponding argument that funds allocated to a external accountability would be much better invested in training, staff retention and remuneration. Not all programs are funded through the state government. However, agencies have a need to sustain themselves and to continue with the work that they were set up to provide. They do not operate in a vacuum though, embracing workplace culture that includes differing philosophical and political positions, attitudes, training foci, prejudices and knowledge. Men’s violence to women is subsumed within the workplace culture of the organisation, becoming another material task just like any other workplace object. As Hearn (1998) argued, there appears a need to give careful consideration to not only “...the links between client relations and (workplace) culture, but (to) the links between client relations and patriarchism / anti-patriarchism (within the agency)” (1998:182). Given that the state is a gendered (masculinised) institution, as Franzway, Court & Connell (1989:32) noted, “…patriarchal interests may be embodied quite impersonally in the hierarchy of organisations and the hierarchy of functions within the state”. It is important to be mindful of the insidious means by which the threads of patriarchy weave themselves through the fabric of organisations and institutions and, as Dankwort & Rausch (2000:955) cautioned, that there is not an unwitting replication of “...the same values, attitudes and structures that contribute to (the abuse of women)”190. It could, then, also be argued that enforced standards of practice represent an authoritative rule which, ironically, complements a patriarchal, privileged position.

190 In researching institutional abuse, Davidson & McNamara (1999:94) found that “…(s)ympathetic staff were often silenced by many of the systemic factors that silenced victims”. These included a culture of expertness where the ‘less knowledgeable’ are not heard; agency philosophy that focuses on individual pathology; and a lack of power (often gender-based) to be able to intervene.
Conclusion

The second part of this thesis applied the stated theoretical frameworks to the underlying key axioms upon which practitioners and sector agents base their practice. Interview data has been used to deconstruct the juxtaposition of stated political and practice position, and the acting out of these claims. The claim of working under the philosophy of a feminist analysis of men’s violence has been examined in light of the overwhelming rhetoric being that programs are informed by a feminist analysis of men’s violence and abuse in the family. Practitioners have evolved their use of language to include terminology that grew out of the women’s shelter and refuge sector. It would appear that this perspective is somewhat narrowly interpreted and re-framed to embrace power and control issues at the individual level: feminist analyses of men’s violence in the family appear to have been depoliticised and coopted, and that there is limited reference to the relevance of feminist critiques for men’s interventionist programs. This suggests that the origins and cutting edge of feminist-inspired analyses are lost as the personal takes the focus of the intervention instead of the broader socio-political structural frameworks of patriarchy and gender-based oppression in which this behaviour germinates and is sanctioned.

This chapter has shown that programs appear to focus on the violence of individual men towards individual women at the expense of the socio / political structural foundations within which this behaviour germinates. I have argued that the diversity of the collective violences that men use against their partners is more complex than an accumulation of actions by the individual. While there is an obligation on individual men to accept responsibility for their own behaviour, it is also the responsibility of men’s interventionist programs to challenge the diversity of socio /
cultural variables that perpetuate and impact against men’s violence. With this in mind, if male dominance and gender inequality are reinterpreted as the consequences from the variables of men’s sex role socialisation, then the socio/political supports for male dominance are left unquestioned. As I have argued, it is problematic that the violent behaviours of individual men are reinterpreted as interpersonal issues, making them more amenable for individual interventions in the form of therapy. It is also important that the socially constructed category of men as a non-homogeneous class be acknowledged. When talking about, and engaging with the violence of ‘men’ it is imperative to acknowledge the considerable differences between men as well as overlapping similarities.

On-going debate regarding the continuum of men’s behaviours, a need to consider diagnostic diversity supporting different interventions for different men - effectively, one size does not fit all and may indeed be counterproductive, was discussed. The usefulness and restrictions of running homogenous programs for diverse offenders is, at best, ideologically contentious and has profound implications for how MBCPs are conceptualised and delivered. While evidence that individual factors play a role in men’s choice of behaviour is easily found, most males exposed to a “culture of violence” and male dominance do not perpetrate violence.191

In attempting to address the issue of transparency and consistency for service provision the sector has developed standards that formally document desirable and quality practice. While, for most practitioners, the prescriptive guidelines make the work somewhat more accessible, somewhat more transparent and hopefully safer, for others, the prescribing of a benchmark that is monitored and interpreted as

191 That is, specifically overt physical violence.
restrictive appears to represent an invasion to their therapeutic practice and space, and to their own ideas concerning innovative intervention. The issue of compliance through monitoring also appears somewhat problematic. There has been an attempt to address the thorny question of how to ensure that programs are implementing the required benchmark of practice through self-reporting of surveys and statutory declarations. However, there would still appear to be a long way to go in convincing external sources, or many across the sector, that relying on self-reporting is a sufficient response, or that it is overly believable in the climate of agencies wanting their own ‘slice of the pie’.
CHAPTER 7

DISCOURSE IN PRACTICE:
INTERPRETING NOMENCLATURE

Introduction

This chapter will describe and analyse how language is used to attempt to locate authenticity within text production. I use the term discourse practice to refer to both the socio/cognitive components of text production, and how various agents and agencies produce and interpret text. Fairclough (1995) suggested that, with its focus on text production and the validity-claiming capacity of nomenclature, discourse practice is an integral dimension of critical discourse analysis as texts should not be uncoupled from an analysis of the cultural context in which the texts are embedded.

Text production, policy production and political positioning all take place in the context of bureaucracies, hierarchies and institutions, and there is a need to examine how agencies and actors both produce and interpret texts within this setting. Interpretation is linked to the axioms that actors have taken on. There are, as Fairclough (1992) proposed, specifically sociocognitive dimensions of text production and interpretation that centres upon the interplay between the members’ resources, which discourses participants have internalised and bought with them to text processing. There is also the text itself, which contains a set of clues for the interpretation process (1992:80).
This chapter will consider the dynamics and context involved in the naming of various components of this intervention. Much power is located in the naming process. The previous chapter identified issues relating to the ownership of the behaviour by questioning terminology such as “domestic violence”, “family violence”, “male family violence” or “men’s family violences”? In this chapter I enquire as to who are those involved in the dynamics of this behaviour. That is, who uses this behaviour? Are they “batterers”, “abusers” or “perpetrators” for example? Who are those affected by this behaviour? Are they “victims”, “survivors”, “women who have experienced violence”? Do all forms of domestic / family oppression and gender injustice warrant the terminology “violence”?

In chapter 2 I identified anger management as one component of a behavioural framework of intervention with violent men. As noted, there have been concerns raised about the use of anger management as an appropriate intervention with men who perpetrate violence and abuse in the family. While most workers would agree with the dominant discourse that men’s violence and abuse in the family is not necessarily driven by anger, but is a consequence of patriarchy, male domination and the socially structured desire for men to control women, anger management has become a core component of the curriculum of the vast majority of programs.

How agencies and programs inform the community of what they do is a clear indication of exactly where their philosophies, politics and practice are centred. Public statements of rhetorical positioning are about the location of the intervention within the parameters of the discourse, and as such they highlight the various ways in which agents attempt to establish jurisdiction over their expression of authenticity within the sector. This chapter will apply a critical lens to the randomly accessed
advertising material of four programs to analyse how the claimed theoretical and philosophical frameworks are portrayed within the public arena.

The majority of programs do not specifically respond to the intersections of variables such as class and culture. This is despite working-class men being vastly over-represented in the group make-up, and men from non-Anglo cultures being considerably under-represented\textsuperscript{192}. While these factors do not imply a causal relationship with men’s family violences, it is problematic not to consider how these constantly correlating structural variables may contribute to the influence on the individual man.

Claims of ‘success’ or otherwise continue to circle interventions addressing men’s dominating behaviours in the family. The difficulties involved in the evaluation of successful outcomes and intervention in men’s behaviour change programs are greater than would first appear. This chapter will first reflect on previous evaluations and consider the limitations of these. I will argue that the research foundations that substantiate many claims of success have been fraught with methodological shortcomings, not the least being that the program logic of MBCPs is rarely articulated (Pease, 2004), leading to possibilities of low levels of program integrity. Previous research has presented interpretations of outcomes that have been accused of being over-generalised and conducted without due care for context or researcher bias. Added to this is the vexed question of the place of participant evaluation that is often in opposition to partner feedback. This chapter concludes by considering the hurdles involved in defining what it is that is being evaluated, and how the measurement of desired outcomes may be recorded.

\textsuperscript{192} NTV is currently lobbying for increased funding for the development of demonstration MBCPs in languages other than English. See NTV Notes, November 2010:1-2.
What’s in a name?

There are competing forces that impact upon the way that definitions and identities are portrayed in the discourse of men’s violence and abuse in the family. The process of defining and naming, and then applying those definitions is, as Orr (1998:34) pointed out, an “…inherently political process”. There is diversity across the sector, nationally and internationally, with regards to the language used in referring to participants and partners, as well as to the processes involved. I now reflect upon some of the more prominent definitions and terminology that underpins men’s family violence interventionist frameworks.

(i) The abuser

The peak body, NTV, in its standards manual for facilitating MBCPs, stated that

(people often use the term ‘perpetrator’ to refer to men who use violence. This suggests a type of person rather than a type of behaviour. Men choose to use this behaviour and can…choose not to use it. In this manual the term ‘men who use violence’ is used instead (V-NET, 1995: 1.6.3).

The Office of Women’s Policy (2001) suggested that the terminology “men who use violence toward family members” is appropriate as it “...describes the actions of the man rather than labelling the person and …identifies those who are experiencing the violence” (OWP, 2001:9). Anecdotally, the majority of those working under the NTV umbrella would be in sympathy with this perspective, citing labelling theory and responsibility as their foundations. This perspective was reinforced in interviewee’s responses.

FM1. It’s about behaviour not the person. Someone isn’t a perpetrator and that’s it, full stop, that’s all there is to them. The behaviour’s a choice, they can stop using it if they decide, therefore they’re someone who uses violence and abuse.

See, for example, Margolin, 1997.
MF1. *This is one of those ‘let’s get bogged down in theoretical arguments’ things that crops up. It’s not that important.*

MF7. *It handballs responsibility back to the man. He can’t say ‘well that’s just how I am’. There’s a lot of ownership here about minimising, denying…and politics too. Although often women’s services seem to think differently.*

It would appear that they do. Many within women’s services tend to favour the terminology “perpetrator” or “perp”. There appears to be a certain (understandable) stamp of anger which goes with this label which certainly has a much greater impact as there is little ambiguity as to who is responsible for the behaviour. There is power in using the word ‘perpetrator’ and I have been acutely aware of this as I have woven the language of the abused and the abuser through this research.

Literature from the USA and the UK usually refers to ‘batterers’ programs’, a term that has never caught on in Australia. A poststructural lens is useful in clarifying an issue here in how the use of the term perpetrator (abuser / batterer) within the discourse elevates the status of a role to that of an identity; the individual is thus labelled, as the focus is then directed to the individual as opposed to the behaviour. Within this elevation there is the very real potential to minimise, deny and pass on responsibility; akin to ‘this is what I am; therefore this is what I do - regardless’.

Further, this category constructs a unified portrayal of the person using the violence, and in that process it conceals differences amongst men as it unites them as an homogeneous cohort. Those who represent the broad forces of authority, or are able to impose definitions of morality and behaviour upon others, provide the main sources of labeling. Thus, labels applied to create categories of deviance – perpetrator, abuser, for example - are also an overt expression of the power
structures and hierarchies within society\textsuperscript{194}. Within all this, however, there may be room for the pragmatic; that being that it is shorter and somewhat practical to say perp’ or even ‘perpetrator’ than to continually say ‘men who choose to use violence and abuse in the family’\textsuperscript{195}.

(ii) The abused

The frameworks for naming those who experience men’s violence and abuse in the family have also changed over the years to reflect the choices and options available to women after experiencing this behaviour. While women, supported by the shelter and refuge sector, began to speak out about the abuse that was taking place behind closed doors

there was no specific term that identified the emergent issue; ‘wife-beating’, ‘wife abuse’, battered women’, and ‘battered wives’ were all used interchangeably, and apparently unproblematically, to name, make visible, and to assert the need for action (Walker, 1990:24).

Those working directly with women escaping violence initially used the terminology “victim” for political reasons of demonstrating that the violence was not the mutual or sole fault of the woman, and to also draw attention to the pathologising of women who had been abused (Scutt, 1983). There was no intent to imply that women are victims generally, lacked agency over their own lives as a whole, or that they passively accept violence and domination. The terminology ‘victim’ indicated at the outset that women who had experienced violence at the hands of their partners were not responsible for that behaviour; indeed, they were the objects of such behaviour.

As Laing (2002) argued

\textsuperscript{194} There are interesting reflections here with regards to the use of language and locations of ownership of terminology. As Margolin (1997: 150) noted, it is “…(t)hrough the urgency…of rhetoric, (that) one class of people is captured (through language and) in writing by members of another social class”. See Bittner, (1965), Scott & Lyman (1968), or Hewitt & Stokes (1975).

\textsuperscript{195} I have also been aware that at times I switch terminologies, pleading in my defence a similar argument that it is much easier to write ‘perpetrator’ than to continually speak / write ‘man who chooses to use violence and abuse’!
the strength of the terms ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ is that they make clear the power relationship in which the abuse occurs. However, they have the (potential) disadvantage of portraying women as passive victims and men as abusers, thereby narrowing the perception of possibilities for change (2002:29).

It is useful to consider the role of subjugation as, in the first instance, it lays a framework in which the experiences of the ‘victim’ – subjective knowledge – is considered to be naïve and beneath the objective knowledges of the other. Chung (2001) proposed that these terminologies must not be used to locate women’s identities solely within their experience of their partner’s violence and abuse. To do so, she suggested, “…only enhances men’s power to continue abusing women long after the relationship has ended and makes (women) potentially complicit in reproducing a unitary view of a domestic violence victim / survivor” (2001:9).196

A poststructural lens illuminates the problematic issue here of how the use of either term ‘victim’197 or ‘survivor’ elevates a role to that of an identity198. As Taylor (1998) pointed out, “…(c)ategories of identity are neither structurally determined, nor freely chosen through consumer lifestyles: they are socially constructed through intrinsic processes of politics, cultural significations and institutional practices that are molded by both macro and micro relations of power” (Taylor, 1998:341). A woman’s most intimate identity is entwined through her experiences and these “…(i)dentities are ongoing, personal and political narratives in which actors participate, empowered to either greater or lesser extents by resources of personal experience and ability, and cultural and social organisation” (Calhoun, 1994:28).

196 The difficulties inherent in working with the structures of the state are exemplified due to the concern that the state government has reverted back to the “language of victim and perpetrator – language...(that) hinders accurate definitions of people living with violence” (NTV Notes, March 2008).

197 Further reflection could consider the issue of ‘victim’ with upper case or lower case ‘v’.

198 See, for example, Ferraro (1996).
It is useful to consider the scripting of the experiences of ‘survivor discourse’. Language, as an important site of struggle, plays out domination and resistance. The act of naming and speaking out are the initial frameworks for contributing to the transformation of power dynamics and subjectivities. However, this is potentially paradoxical as there exists the capacity to “…inscribe them into hegemonic structures and to produce docile, self-monitoring bodies who willingly submit themselves” to the scrutiny of professional experts (Alcoff & Gray, 1993:262). Feminist naming of domestic violence experiences has been met with resistance from dominant discourses, as discourse structures what it is possible to say through rules of exclusion. There was no public significance to the term ‘battered woman’ before the feminist movement politicised the issue by defining it as a form of violence produced by a system of male domination (Bumiller, 2008). Ownership of language has been transgressive in presuming objects antithetical to the dominant discourse; but these same discourses are used by dominant groups to attempt to silence such challenges or else to maintain the hegemonic position by manipulating it in such a way that it is fractured, disempowered and no longer disruptive. There is a paradoxical danger with what Foucault referred to as the ‘confessional mode’ whereby the language of the survivor becomes a commodity: that is that it focuses attention on the victim thereby deflecting attention from the perpetrator’s behaviour; it invites mediation, thus depriving the (woman) of her agency and restating a binary opposition between raw experience dismissed as subjective and objective knowledge (Howe, 2008:174).

However, women surviving and moving on from men’s violence and abuse in the family must continue to embrace new and different discursive forms. What is required here is to bear witness to the truth of pervasive violence and abuse perpetrated against women in ways that cannot be constrained, recuperated or
ignored; as discourse has the power to be seized, particularly by those naming their own experiences (Alcoff & Gray, 1993:280).

It is useful to remember in these two previous examples that particular emphases are articulated, while other positions are marginalised, as the coherence of discourse depends on difference (Featherstone and Fawcett, 1995:27). While professional practice discourses refer to men who use violence / batterers / perpetrators and survivor / victims as a cohort of homogeneous and distinctive grouping, what is neglected is both the differences within each cohort, and the commonalities across them (Healy, 2000).

(iii) Violence? and / or abuse?

I have previously suggested that while there is variation in the form and process of the violence and abuse that men perpetrate in the family, the intent is still the same; notwithstanding that it may be more a reflection of men’s unconscious intent to control. There is no ambiguity that physical and sexual violence are both criminal acts¹⁹⁹ and must be responded to according to legal frameworks²⁰⁰. The Family Violence Protection Act (2008) stated that family violence is behavior that

- is physically or sexually abusive;
- is emotionally or psychologically abusive;
- is economically abusive;
- is threatening or coercive;
- controls or dominates and causes fear for safety or wellbeing.

Thus, all these behaviours reside under the one descriptive umbrella of violence.

There are, as previously mentioned, other manifestations of attempts by men to dominate and control family members that are often regarded as more insidious,

¹⁹⁹ One hopes not!
²⁰⁰ Again, the need to acknowledge the criminal offence of stalking according to the 1995 The Crimes Act.
frequently more fearful, and fear of those behaviours constantly hanging over recipients’ heads is used as another on-going means of control. It is of interest how the sector responds to the broad umbrella of naming these abusive behaviours as violence: an action that attempts to expand upon naming men’s oppressive and dominating behaviours. This strategy was aimed at encouraging reflection upon the power and control dynamics within a relationship that may be considered as taken-for-granted, or par-for-the-course (Pease, 2004:50). As I discussed in chapter two, Liddle (1989) made the point that upholding “…leers, glances and patronising jokes as cases of violence201 is perhaps a misguided way to make the point that these forms of behaviour are oppressive” (1989:766). Understanding something like “derogatory taunts” (FVPA, 2008:12) as violence does not appear to come readily to a population that has been raised on the sassy, petty sarcasm and put downs of US American sitcom television202!

From the perspective of the general public there were concerns raised through VicHealth (2006) regarding the limited understanding of many respondents in their awareness of the serious nature of emotionally abusive and controlling behaviours. While I have previously made reference to this, it is important to understand that respondents’ answers as to whether an action was ‘domestic violence’ or not depended a lot on the context. In some circumstances there was agreement that certain behaviours constituted violence, though in other situations they were regarded as a part of day-to-day relationship conflict. This was confirmed in the survey where the questions asked whether domestic violence was ‘always’, ‘usually’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’ an appropriate category for the behaviour and its

201 My emphasis.
202 I continue to struggle working therapeutically with clients to invite them to consider the place of sarcasm – the only purpose of which is to put someone down, to belittle and disparage them - in an intimate relationship.
intent. For example, the survey found that “…only 40% of men and 55% of women…agreed that ‘repeatedly criticising one’s partner to make them feel bad and useless’ was ‘always violence’, “33% believing that this was ‘sometimes’ the case” (2006:43), and “17% (believing) that repeatedly criticising one’s partner to make them feel bad or useless was not203 violence (2006:42)204.

It is worth looking further at the issue of gender inequality and the continuum of violence / abuse. There would appear to be concerns regarding using the terminology ‘violence’ “…as a residual category into which anything205 pernicious or degrading might be thrown” (Liddle, 1989:766). While acknowledging that there is a point attempting to be made here, it is concerning that the concept, and in particular, the political location of violence, stands to be in danger of losing its authenticity if all forms of gender inequality and oppression are included under the one umbrella. I have previously made reference to the more holistic and expanded relationship and domestic inequality framework that was elucidated by Ashcraft (2000). The rationale favoured by the peak body NTV in its use of the terminology violence is that

(m)ens behaviour change programs frequently address behaviours that do not involve physical violence, but that affects others’ health, wellbeing, freedom, sense of safety and autonomy. Some people might not think of these when they see the word ‘violent’, or might hesitate to call them violent. For this reason, NTV generally uses the term ‘violent and controlling behaviours to cover the wide range of behaviours that violate the right of another person to safety, autonomy and wellbeing (2006:25).

203 My emphasis.
204 There was an acknowledged gender variation in this survey; that is, men appearing to generally have more narrow definitions of what are regarded as violent/abusive/controlling behaviours. This is attributed in part to a product of men's greater structural dominance within society and ”…partly a consequence of the particular form of the…social relationship with the woman in question” (Hearn, 1998:117). See, also, VicHealth, 2009.
205 My emphasis.
My own position is that I struggle with this definition, questioning whether it provides sufficient respect to all forms of gender-based injustice. Gelles (1997:14) argued that including a long list of abusive behaviours under the broad term of violence “…muddies the waters (to such an extent that it is) impossible to determine what causes abuse or (to) delineate targets for intervention”. Stark (2007) made the point that there is a distinct behavior to violence; and this is relies on a unique connection, not only to injury and pain, but to suffering that takes other forms. He argued that in continuing to subsume all forms of abuse to violence, we conflate the multiple layers of women’s oppression in personal life, making non-violent abusive acts seem highly subjective or soft core. A metaphorical sleight of hand sidesteps the hard work of delineating where these acts fall empirically on what Stanko (1990) calls the “continuum of unsafety” in women’s lives (2007:86).

Agents thus appear to use language in the pursuit of their own goals; while being embedded in discursive systems that are characterised through tradition, and immersion in bureaucratic and political institutions. However, this could perhaps be best summed by drawing on Walker’s (1990) contextual observation that, within a framework of naming the injustices that women experience within their intimate relationships, regardless of the actual language used, expanded definitions of violence are “…detached from (their) grounding in the social relations in which events and activities take place” (1990:103) 206.

206 In my therapeutic relationships with couples and singles I have attempted to invite female clients to consider that their experiences seem to fit under the umbrella of family / domestic violence definitions. Many take great offence. They don’t want to be identified with a cohort about whom they already have an image as ‘less than’ and second, their partner’s behaviour has more of a brush of unfair inequality mated with covert manipulation than ‘violence’; a profoundly loaded word. This suggests something more like the ‘subtle flavours’ of abuse and control identified by Ashcraft (2000) and Stark (2007). What Stark (2007:111) suggests they are referring to is “…that the reality they are experiencing has no public audience and...they have no way to give it voice”.

200
Anger management as a component of behaviour change

As previously discussed, earlier intervention with men who are violent and abusive in the family was initially targeted at ‘anger management’.207 This response relies upon the premise that, by recognising the thoughts and corresponding physiological arousal that accompanies strong emotions such as anger, then the emotions can be changed and alternative behaviour can be invoked (Navaco, 1975; Gondolf & Russell, 1986). As previously mentioned, anger management focuses narrowly on anger as an emotion to be managed, rather than addressing the man’s violence and abuse as the offending behaviours to be ended.208 Proposing anger management as a response to men’s family violence promotes the concept that a man’s violent and controlling behaviours are a consequence of his inability to manage his anger. This perspective suggests that there is a causal link between a man’s anger, and his use of violent and controlling behaviour. Such a proposition, however, fails to recognise that men can also be violent and controlling when they are not angry, and that a man’s use of violent and controlling behaviour is the direct result of his own choice to use it. There would appear to be a considerable danger in men who are using violence being able to reduce anger management to a set of techniques that enables them to maintain control in a perhaps less physically violent manner, while still continuing their abuse at many other varied levels.

Many workers feel that it is appropriate to publicly acknowledge that anger management does have a place as an important component of a MBCP curriculum. Many men beginning the journey of behaviour change state that they just ‘explode’ and that they seem to be unaware of their level of anger, or of the warning signs of

207 Various organisations not under the NTV umbrella continue to use this language and focus of intervention.

208 Perhaps the terminology ‘anger management’ is a misnomer and a more useful term would be ‘appropriate expression of anger’?
the escalation of their anger, or of the way this then manifests into behaviour. Practitioners frequently claim that if men can initially identify their level of anger then they are better able to develop more appropriate intervention strategies to avoid the threat of violence or abuse. The following response demonstrates an initial exploration.

**MM5.** *The number of men who come in say that they’re angry, or that they’re feeling out of control. There’s a lot of scope immediately (in using anger management) because it’s easy for men to get a hold of and it’s very real for them...it’s quick, to the point. It’s like a tool that they can put in their toolbox and use straight away so on the first or second night they’ve accomplished something that otherwise they might have missed. It’s simple to learn, simple to start putting into practice.*

I concur with this, but only to a point. There is a danger that the man will not attend for the subsequent nights of a program as he may be under the impression that the issue has been resolved. Various media have picked up and run with the concept of anger management as a quick fix remedy, and the increasing number of men seeking this approach confirms this. However, it must be acknowledged that the anger management definition and approach, in focusing on one individual emotion of individual men, fails to address the key issue of his abuse as power and control occurring within the context of societal gender inequality. Dankwort (2000), for example, raised “…concern over how such methods highlight expressive behaviours (in failing) to challenge men’s beliefs of entitlement to control women…(while)...teaching a man cues about imminent outbursts without connecting his anger with his chosen means (abuse) and his selected target (his spouse)” (2000:942). The following responses are varied in their engagement of the issue of anger management. They range from a sector-sanctioned position regarding anger / behaviour, through to what appears to be a whole-hearted embracing of this technique as the most useful component of the intervention.

**MM3.** *It’s not about anger. It’s about behaviour.*
MM2. There needs through the whole process to be a clear distinction between the emotion which is anger, and the violence and abuse which is the behaviour. Many men don’t see that...at least initially. And let’s be blunt...some men choose not to see it at all.

FF2. I don’t think that you could not have some component of anger management in the program. So many men identify a causal relationship between their anger and abuse that it wouldn’t be worth your while to try and engage them any further unless that was acknowledged. You have to start where they’re at.

MF1. I really do think that it doesn’t matter all that much. You know......as long as the violence stops......and that’s my bottom line. I can appreciate all the rhetoric and the politics and the posturing. You can write a PhD Pete with all the theory and stuff but if the violence stops through an intervention that the fellow understands and is able to work with then I’d reckon that that achieves the desired outcome. Women can be given other options and choices for support and safety.

MM5. I’m quite happy with the focus on anger management. It’s often the only thing that men can get a handle on. It’s only NTV that wants to make a big deal out of it. Men learn much more through anger management than probably any other topic through the program.

The majority of participants involved in this research were in agreement that anger management in isolation is not an appropriate response to men’s family violence. However, most would agree that if “...violence stops through an intervention that the fellow understands and is able to work with”, then that is a very useful starting point. Of course, this does not sit well with the dominant framework of structural location, and while it represents a legitimate attempt by practitioners to provide an immediate practical intervention, their publicly stated acceptance of anger management, albeit in this context, appears to need to be always reinforced with a caveat and disclaimer. While discourse is able to shed light on how the hegemony of dominant groups and agendas is secured, justified and contested (Fraser, 1991), it is important to acknowledge that attempting to get men to move beyond the narrowness of anger as the cause of abuse was where a lot of the difficult work lay.

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209 I wonder if this final comment is not more a reflection of that programs’ dynamics?
within a program. Poignantly, it was also acknowledged that, for many men, anger management was often the only insight that they got from the intervention.

My own position is that tools of what I would refer to as ‘appropriate expression of anger’ are vital to be included in a man’s new folio of understanding and responsibility. Violent and abusive, dominating and controlling behaviours need to cease immediately and support undertaken for the most pressing issues that accompany it. These would include the broad church of safety and, following from that, immediate attempts to diffuse possible re-occurrences\textsuperscript{210}. If men can isolate the emotion (anger) from the behaviour (abuse)\textsuperscript{211}, then in the understanding of behaviour-as-choice they can begin to see realistic options for the future. However, that anger – the emotion - that got them there in the first place still has to go somewhere, and re-interpreting a man’s belief system must come with responsibilities to offer alternatives to meet safe outcomes.

In my opinion there is a robust place for ‘anger management’ within a MBCP as it ticks short-term boxes of containment, and is a more-than-useful invitation to consider \textit{first doing no more harm}. Practitioners deal with strong emotions, often clustered and ambivalent, and there is an ethical need to provide a broad space to accommodate that. This focus does, however, appear to treat the symptom not the cause; and part of ‘anger management’ for me is about directing a man down the path of ideologically sector-correct engagement with patriarchy and privilege, behaviour as choice, and grounded in domination and control. The initial contact usually provides a window of exploration to other issues. That this may not lie enmeshed with feminist theory is, in my opinion, not important at this moment as

\textsuperscript{210} This would include criminal justice interventions as a priority.
\textsuperscript{211} And they can.
there is a need to hold possibly conflicting positions in an endeavour to achieve a desired outcome. If I hold broad-base safety as my bottom line, then I will use what is available in the short term to attempt to achieve those objectives.

**Constructing and selling the message**

The means by which discourses are constructed to present culture, its execution and its affinity are described by Fairclough as the “...ideational functions” of language (1992:64). Using any media - in this instance printed advertising - as a collective agent plays a considerable role in this process of constructing and reproducing the dominant discourses. Baumgartner (1993) suggested that agents use media to focus attention on limited constructions of a political issue, thus reinforcing and reflecting the taken-for-granted portrayal of the demand for policy engagement or change. Accordingly, the use of media can reinforce and reproduce hegemonic power.

While programs that operate under the umbrella of the peak body, NTV, agree to uphold and “…adhere to the minimum standards of practice (as) a condition of membership” (V-NET, 1995:1.3.2), individual agencies and program hierarchies make their own choices as to how programs are portrayed and sold to the public through community information and media advertising. This means that there can be considerable diversity in the way in which programs are portrayed. As previously mentioned, the sector is not homogeneous in its thinking, and individuals and agencies occupy varying positions along the political continuum\(^212\). It is no secret within the sector that some agencies and practitioners are regarded as more politically ‘hard line’ than others as they are pitted against considerable ambiguities and points of contention, and are aligned and segregated through different

\(^{212}\)This is political work after all.
vocabularies and articulatory practices. This is reflected in the nomenclature, theoretical context and rhetorical positioning that the agency publicly states in informing the community of what it can, and has on, offer as a response to men’s violence and abuse in the family.

Ross (2000) proposed that the interpretations undertaken by key players serve to reinforce relations between the interests of the elite, and from this vantage point they nurture and maintain alliances of domination. This is supported through aligning with the state - which also feeds and uses diverse media to appropriate discourses - and to arbitrate policy interpretations and sector and cultural orthodoxy. The production of various texts is intrinsic to predicting how those texts will be engaged with so as to curtail resistance by the masses to the state’s preferred choice of (funded) response. As discussed in chapter 5, framing policy is vital to securing external support and favour for the actions of the state; assuming that cultural paradigms and institutional dynamics are receptive to change. As I have previously mentioned, van Dijk (1998) referred to this hegemonic component of text production as legitimation, a practice that

(presupposes) norms and values. They implicitly or explicitly state that some course of action, decision or policy is ‘just’ within the given legal or political system or, more broadly, within the prevalent moral order of society (1998:156).

One problem associated with this practice is the deliberate setting up of binaries – perpetrator / victim for example - as a conscious strategy to sell the message to the public, and to focus attention on the primacy of subjectivity and negative framing in the process of reform. This entails the predetermined construction of subject positions that tenders a ‘best fit’ with the most dominant cultural discourses. As Ross (2000) stated, the underlying point being made is that the cause of the problem thus lies with the individual. This is questionable for the focus of this research.
While on one hand there can be no argument that individual men need to take responsibility for their choices of behaviours, this position lets the state ‘off the hook’ by not acknowledging the cultural and social locations within which these behaviours are learned, replicated, reinforced and sanctioned; a location of gendered male domination. This clearly articulates the generative flow-on of discourse, particularly that which reproduces dominant hegemonies and safeguards political weight and support for policy change.

These points are reflected in the nomenclature, theoretical context and rhetorical positioning that agencies publicly offer in informing the community where they stand on, and what they may have to offer, a response to men’s violence and abuse in the family. Figures 1, 2, 3 & 4 are publicly promoted advertising flyers or brochures for four different MBCPs\textsuperscript{213}. These advertising materials frequently differ markedly in their basic philosophy, language, and in the focus that each of them directs at the intervention. This is reflected in the titles of each of these programs, “Men’s Responsibility Group” (MRG), “Heavy M.E.T.A.L.”, “MATES GROUP” and “Ongoing Change”, which are considerably different in their immediate location of the intervention. The MRG defines itself on the other side of this brochure as “…(A) group for men to say ‘No’ to violence and controlling behaviour”. Within the themes that are being deconstructed there is little ambiguity here as to the political positioning of the MRG. Behaviour is named for what it is, and the purpose of the group clearly articulated. Heavy M.E.T.A.L. states that the goal of the program is “…(t)o help men to lead a non-violent lifestyle”. In contrast, MATES is somewhat ambiguous with its claim to be “…a program for men who are hurting the people they care about most”. This ambiguity is further compounded through realising that

\textsuperscript{213} These were simply picked by chance. At the time that I walked past they were the only brochures on a side table at the offices of the peak body, NTV.  

207
Men's Responsibility Group offers men who use violence and controlling behaviour new ways of relating to their partners, children and others.

What is controlling behaviour?
Controlling behaviour is the use of force, intimidation and power to get your way. You may not think you are being controlling and it may not be your intention. Nonetheless your behaviour can have the effect of being controlling towards your partner and others.

What about my anger or temper?
Many men report that their violence occurs when they are angry. We do not believe that anger is the 'cause' of violence, but that violence is about using power and control. Many men report that after attending the Men's Responsibility Group they understand the impact their violence has on their family, take more responsibility for their behaviour and treat their partner and children with greater respect.

Is it difficult to change?
It can be difficult to change old patterns, long term behaviour and established beliefs. However, it is possible.

Controlling behaviour is a form of family violence. Family violence includes:
- Physical - hitting, kicking, pushing, holding and using weapons
- Sexual - forced and unwanted sexual content including rape in marriage
- Verbal/Emotional - put downs, insults, name calling, threats, mind games and ridiculing your partner's beliefs and values
- Economic - controlling access, use and knowledge of money
- Social - isolating your partner from family, friends and other support. Checking up on her and humiliating her in public
- Intimidation - breaching things, threatening looks, words and gestures

Some feedback about the program
I don't get so angry now and I don't have my tantrums.
I realise now how little it was for my family when I did.

I've seen that my partner is trying to make changes and I can see differences in how he is at home with our daughter and myself.

I wish I had found out about the group earlier.
It would have saved our family a lot of heartache and money.

Figure 1.

Men's Responsibility Group (MRG)
Figure 2

Heavy M.E.T.A.L. Group

David Nugent is a facilitator for Men's Behaviour Change Groups in Victoria. He has been involved in men's programs for ten years.

He appeared on the ABC Documentary “Primitive Fire” where he shared part of his journey of change.

David related one day that if he did not change his behavior he would have had his family. Attending a Behaviour Change Group over two years ago saved his relationship with his partner and sons. David states, “I am glad I chose to seek help. I have given my partner and two children a chance to be happy and I see at peace instead of out of control.”

David has continued his work by graduating at Swinburne University of Technology with a Graduate Certificate in Social Science for Male Family Violence as a group facilitator and Telephone Counselor. In 2005 he completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling and Human Services at La Trobe University. In 2006, he became a certified member of the Australian Counselling Association.

From 2001 to 2005, David has been facilitating men's groups at Dandenong Community Health and Women's Community Health and Relationship Awards. As well, he is a volunteer telephone counsellor for the Men’s Referral Service. In 2006, David started a young men's program at Tarrawarra Secondary College (Dandenong West Campus) to help boys and girls from the age of 13 to learn alternative ways of expressing their anger and frustration.

Heavy M.E.T.A.L. Group

Men's Education Towards Anger & Life

PROGRAM GOALS

✈ To help men lead a non-violent lifestyle.
✈ To help men identify, understand and take responsibility for their behaviour, attitudes and emotional reactions.
✈ To provide support and strategies that help men through their crisis of change from abusive behaviour to non-abusive behaviour.
✈ To contribute to an improved, safer situation for family members and encourage men to treat women and children with respect and equality.

Men are invited to seek each other in a positive, open and supportive environment.

For appointment or further information, contact:

David Nugent Ph: 0401 766 877

or visit our website: www.heavymetalgroup.com.au

ARE you…

✈ Getting frustrated and exploding?
✈ Angry with the people you care about most?
✈ Doing things that leave you feeling guilty & ashamed?
✈ Feeling overwhelmed, out of control and confused?
Figure 3.

MATES GROUP
Figure 4.

On-going Change

What we ask of group members:

- That new members meet leaders beforehand for introductions.
- That members treat one another with respect.
- That there will be no violence during or around the session.
- That people arrive free of drugs, including alcohol.
- That we speak as openly and honestly as we can.
- That whatever arises during a meeting remains confidential.

Change that keeps on going

Problems in handling anger usually come from deep within us. To make real change we need to look at the sources and the symptoms. Every person is different, so everyone has important differences in their needs.

Group programs are usually the best way to find what is behind our angry feelings, how they affect us, and how to limit the control they have over us in practice. Because in a group there is usually someone else who shares some of our experience and knows how it feels. This means that such groups lead to more change, and more change more quickly and permanently, than working 'one on one' even with a very gifted professional.

Men who were in groups like these over ten years ago tell us that their horizons are still expanding far beyond what they (or we) thought possible. Once begun, change goes on.

Some come to an Ongoing Change group because they see it as simply the right program for them. Others say they need further work even though they have already made some changes. Some come to check whether the group could be useful. Most come because they were sent by a friend or a legal authority. They are all welcome.

Ongoing Change

Groups for those whose anger concerns them

Out of Violence Inc.

A group program for those who find that they need to change the ways they act when anger rises, or who need to consider the possibility that they could make changes.

Groups are facilitated by people who have many experiences of people making changes like this.

They know about positive changes that can be made from difficult beginnings.

Group Programs:

Available at East Melbourne:

And Frankston:

(Further locations are planned for 2006.)

Themes:

Every session is about change of behaviour. Each session will use the current experience of those who are present. The groups try to see whatever is brought to each session and to make some coherence of it.

Cost:

The fee is $15 per session but with lower charges negotiated as needed.

Guidelines:

The program is based on the recommendations of the No To Violence "Manual for Running Men's Groups", where these apply to ongoing groups.

Facilitators:

Each group is facilitated by two trained and experienced people.

Why should I join a group?

- Do something good for your family, your workmates, yourself.
- Take responsibility for what you do.
- Be more gentle with others and yourself.
- Find yourself more.
- Stop killing yourself.
- What will we do?
- We will respect you.
- We will trust you to tell truth as you know it.
- We will not go behind your back.
- We will listen to anyone who says they want you to help yourself BUT we will not surrender your right to be yourself with us.
- What is violence about?
- Violence is any behaviour that prevents full growth of a person.
- As we see violence in our society, it is always about relationships, both good and bad.
- It is never about just one person.
- One person can lead the change and it might as well be you.

For more information, contact
MATES was an acronym for (M)en (A)nd (T)heir (E)motions\textsuperscript{214}. Somewhat problematically, it would appear that this is in direct contrast to the sectors’ claimed insistence on separating anger (the emotion) from violence and abuse (the behaviour)\textsuperscript{215}. The fourth brochure, Ongoing Change (Figure 4) demonstrates again some of the incongruities and tensions of language and location of the intervention. Ongoing Change advertises itself as a “…(Group) for those whose anger concerns them” and a “…program for those who find that they need to change the ways they act when anger rises”. This is in stark contrast to the MRG which, as previously identified, is “…for men to say ‘No’ to violence and controlling behaviour”. While Ongoing Change acknowledges that “…(e)very session is about change of behaviour”, only twice more within the brochure is the word ‘behaviour’ used or referred to, and only once is there a reference to “…(taking) responsibility for what you do” (the behaviour).

There would appear to be a consistent theme of therapeutic (emotional) foci - as demonstrated by the careful choice of language - that is woven through many of the proposed interventions offered\textsuperscript{216}. This clear distinction continues through each of these sources. The MRG names “…(c)ontrolling behaviour (as) a form of family violence”, and then goes on to name other manifestations of this behaviour from physical violence through to social isolation. This stark lack of ambiguity would have an impact on a man who was reading this and considering for the first time the location and consequences of his behaviour for his family and himself. The MRG makes it clear that controlling behaviour, force and intimidation is about “…power

\textsuperscript{214} During the course of this research this acronym recently changed to ‘Moving Ahead To Establish change’ as a response to a challenge to the obvious incongruence.

\textsuperscript{215} As the MRG brochure does under the heading “What about my anger or temper?”

\textsuperscript{216} It is worth noting that in terms of ambiguity, the motto of Heavy M.E.T.A.L. is for men to “…get in tune with yourself”!
to get your way”, and acknowledges that others may experience it like that regardless of the man’s intentions. There is a clear publicly stated framework and position as well as recognition that changing patterns, behaviour and established beliefs is difficult, but possible. Heavy M.E.T.A.L., on the opposite side of this presented brochure, names five forms of violence leaving out, for example, financial and male privilege.

Heavy M.E.T.A.L., while encouraging men to take responsibility for their behaviour, trains its lens of focus on men who are “...getting frustrated”, are being left “…feeling guilty and ashamed” and are often “…feeling overwhelmed, out of control and confused”. This is accomplished through “individual and couple counselling217”, “anger management classes” (sic), and, as their website states, “personal development for anger management and communication skills”218. This is a direction that MATES also weaves in and around in taking on a correspondingly emotional language more at home with a therapeutic or counselling framework of intervention. Instead of power and control, violence, force and intimidation, MATES identifies “communication skills”, “assertiveness” and “meaningful relationship(s)” as their focus for appropriate violence intervention with men. It would appear difficult to identify this organisation’s claimed “...systemic…feminist-informed” (PADV, 2004:165) theoretical perspective within the rhetoric of “...(l)earning to recognise…emotions and develop tools to use when these emotions surface”. In using this language, MATES, and to an extent Heavy M.E.T.A.L., appears to hedge closely to reducing violence and abuse to the product of a relationship issue – a

217 This is potentially problematic. As previously mentioned there is a considerable danger in putting forward ‘couples counselling’ as a desired intervention for the man’s violent and abusive behaviours lest the focus be re-directed to include his partner as in some way responsible for his behaviour.
218 www.heavymetalgroup.com.au
shared problem - that can be remedied through the man learning “…communication skills” and “…assertiveness”.

Similarly, Ongoing Change appears to incline towards a shared responsibility for violence when it suggests that “…violence in our society…is always about relationships”. While this program claims that “…(violence) is never about just one person, But…” there appears to be an inference that the caveat ‘but’ is an adjunct to the issue of joint ownership of the problem. Ongoing Change articulates a vision of “…find(ing) yourself more”, and “…being more gentle with yourself and others”, emotive language that appears to sit comfortably with MATES ambition to help men find “…a more meaningful relationship with loved ones”. A further contrast is found in the manner through which Ongoing Change describes violence in their brochure is as “…any behaviour that prevents full growth of a person”. The ambiguity of this contrasts quite markedly with the MRG which dot-points various manifestations of family violence, and then provides a brief description of what these forms entail. Heavy M.E.T.A.L. does similarly as previously mentioned, but it does not locate violence as grounded in controlling behaviour with the clarity that the MRG does.

There is another point worthy of reflection here with regards to the use of the terminology ‘mate’. Within the Australian vernacular ‘mate’ has come to take on particular idiosyncratic overtones that invite Australian men to unite in a shared collective. This symbolism has been forged through World Wars, the Depression and other collective adversarial challenges to a presumption of a shared Australian unity amongst men. In the context of violent men’s behaviour change this is, to my mind, rather problematic as the imagery here suggests a group of ‘mates’ coming together in a warm nurturing environment, bonding with their ‘brothers’, and
sharing some version of ‘secret men’s business’. ‘Male bonding’ to the collectively-shared brotherhood is different from simply friendship among men (Hart, 1988), as it is an act of maintaining power over women by developing a unity between men - one in which women are emphatically unwelcome as they cannot be allowed to come between a man and his MATES.

A point of substantial concern in contrasting these advertising materials lies in the stated transparency of the intervention. The MRG states that “…(c)ontact is made with partners who are offered support and referral”. The MATES literature makes no reference at all to partner contact, but Ongoing Change’s position is very clear when it states both that “…(w)e will not go behind your back”, and more pointedly that “…whatever arises during a meeting remains confidential”. This is concerning, as two of the means through which accountable and transparent practice are addressed are through limited confidentiality, and partner contact. These themes were put to interviewees to consider and respond.

Q. How are the joint issues of accountability and transparency addressed?

FM1. As you know, partner contact is basically mandatory now. It’s written in as a standard and will probably be given more attention in the revised standards.219

MM6. Partner contact is the main way we try and address this. We’d contact partners when the man first accesses the group, at least once during the program, and at the end of the group. Feedback from partners is really the only way we can be sure that stories are fair dinkum…but there’s another point here and that’s that women are provided with information…and it’s often the very first point of contact for her to have her own story and experiences validated.

The Victorian peak body, NTV, has previously stated that

(programs need to hold the men responsible for their violence and abuse, and to prioritise the safety of women and children. A primary

219 During the development of this research the standards of practice were updated. The revised edition was published in January 2006. It would be useful to again consider their revision given further development, particularly in the area of criminal and court-directed referral, since 2006.
One of the foundational axioms upon which the sector locates its interventions is that of partner contact. Woodbridge (2000), in acknowledging the inherent difficulties of this work, stated that “…it is vital that the program…is accountable and transparent to women’s lived experience of domestic violence” (2000:9). Laing (2002), in referencing Mederos (1999), suggested that “…(i)n contrast to the norms of conventional therapeutic encounters221, the confidentiality offered to participants is sharply curtailed, with the program given permission to contact partners and the criminal justice system in order to ensure victim safety222 and offender accountability” (2002:4). Howard (2005:48) stated that “…(m)en joining the group must sign a ‘no confidentiality’ clause”, and “…are informed that the therapist (sic) will speak with their partners”.

It is of concern that the Ongoing Change program appears to be quite clear in its position that group/client confidentiality has precedence over partner safety and external accountability. The revised standards manual (NTV, 2006) is clear in its minimum requirement that to be eligible to enter a group program men must “…(a)gree to program staff having regular contact with…women and children who might be affected by their violent and controlling behaviour” (2006:9). While there is credibility in bearing witness to a man’s story (Weingarten, 2000) and “…(telling the) truth as you know it” (Ongoing Change), there can be no ambiguity about the reasons for attending a MBCP, nor the focus of the intervention – the safety of

220 My emphasis.
221 Again, the vexed dichotomy of therapy verses/as opposed to socio-educational intervention.
222 Again, safety can never be ensured or guaranteed.
women and children. That can only be aspired to if there is transparency and external accountability beyond the level of “…(w)e will trust you to tell the truth”.

It is the state’s capacity to further its own agendas and interests through manipulatory language and advertised media messages that has most impact on the exposition of policy developments. Dominant discourse interpretations within a culture are manipulated to blend the perceived policy problem into a depiction that provides a dogma of the past and an expectation that is, as Edelman (1988:105) suggested, “…compatible with the audience’s ideology”. Thus, it would suggest that much of what is constituted as state-generated policy formation is ostensibly a rhetorical appeal to the masses in order to limit dissention and / or fallout, and to coerce voter support. The broadest reach of the state is found here in the texts developed through professional language that accounts for, that intervenes in, and that rationalises the problem; and, in doing so, it limits options to medicine or criminalisation, where, as Bumiller (2008) suggested, “…feminist ideological concepts (such as) patriarchy or sexual domination are introduced mainly because of their applicability within the language of surveillance, diagnosis, and social control” (2008:13).

Recent Commonwealth-funded advertisements on ‘domestic violence’ reinforce this point. The primary focus of this predominantly televised advertising was on physical violence and sexual coercion that occurred in heterosexual relationships. Absent was a greater engagement with the broader picture of different forms of abusive behaviours223, gay and lesbian relationships, or the structural and cultural foundations that underpin many men’s belief in their ‘right’ to manifest these

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223 Such as male privilege, emotional abuse, economic abuse or social isolation.
behaviours. Again, while acknowledging that a man’s violent and abusive behaviours are his own responsibility, the problem was reduced to that which required a response with intervention directed at the individual. This fits with what appears to be a considerable majority of society’s understanding of ‘domestic violence’; that it is an issue between people, and that reforms need to address a communication or relationship issue. It would seem that the general public’s knowledge of domestic violence frameworks and causes is somewhat limited; the majority of people already have their own constructions of perpetration and desired interventions, and the advertising and subsequent reforms were driven to accommodate those perceptions. Agents carefully choose their language in the pursuit of their own goals and political position (Bacchi, 1999) while they remain embedded in discursive systems that are located in tradition and immersion in bureaucratic and political institutions. As Fairclough (1995) suggested, critical discourse analysis owed a considerable debt to the practice of discourse which has a priority on the production, distribution, and the consumption of texts. Within the musings of this research, this only tends to reinforce the importance of not separating the text from the socio / cultural settings within which they are embedded.

**Naming and responding to intersections of class and culture**

In analysing court documents and cases concerning wife abuse and torture in late nineteenth century England, Cobbe (1878) showed how differences in class circumstances elicited different manifestations of abusive behaviour. Middle class respectabilities regulated women’s behaviours according to defined gender norms; however, material circumstances amongst the working classes made these norms

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224 See, for example, VicHealth 2006, 22-23.
profoundly less effective. It was the brutality and intensity of ‘persistent torture’ of women in the ‘lower classes’ (sic) that Cobbe believed laid the foundation for the backdrop of fear that allowed regulation to leapfrog unchallenged in to middle class homes and families (Cobbe, 1878:61-2). There was clear diversity of behaviour between classes as there were social norms that allowed, justified and sanctioned behaviours.

More than 120 years later, the World Health Organisation (2002) identified that “...(w)hile all social classes experience violence, research consistently suggests that people with the lowest socio-economic status are at (the) greatest risk” (2002:244). While class, ethnicity and culture do not cause violence, it is problematic not to consider the impact of these variables on men’s violence in the family. Hunter (1996), for example, argued that there are different interpretations of dominance by men when such actions are observed through the lens of racial, colonialist and class oppression as opposed to racial, imperialist and/or the privilege of class225. Other writers226 have articulated concerns over the pigeon-holing of gender as a unitary category and the way in which this feeds into a limited simplistic representation of essentialism. While there is considerable research that suggests that socially, culturally, and racially diverse women can be the recipients of the violent and abusive behaviours of men, Eggar (1993) and Watson (2001) suggested that this implies that men’s violence against women is distributed equally across divisions of class, ethnicity and culture. However, Richie (2002) argued against a false sense of unity around the experience of gender oppression, suggesting that low-income women and women of colour and differing ethnicity227 are the most likely to be in

225 My emphasis.
227 This focus was particularly directed at the United States.
the position of experiencing danger in both intimate partner relationships, and social position and status.

Ards and Myers (2004) used an economic model to capture possible links between welfare recipiency and domestic violence (observed at a time prior to welfare reform), and were interested in examining whether welfare recipients were more likely than non-recipients to be in abusive relationships. The results of their study revealed that welfare recipients are more likely than similarly situated non-welfare recipients to experience domestic violence. It is generally agreed that women from low income / working-class backgrounds are considerably more likely to be the victims of violence delivered at the hands of their male partners (McKendy, 1997). As mentioned above, while all women can be potential victims of men’s violent and abusive behaviours and these behaviours are enacted against women from different classes and cultural cohorts, the standings of social class, culture and ethnicity are significant predictors of women’s potential vulnerability to physical violence at the hands of their male partners (Marin & Russo, 1999). Thus, in challenging the violences of marginalised men it is important, as Cheng (1999) pointed out, to grasp the manner in which masculinities are impacted upon by variables of class, ethnicity and race.

There are concerns within the orthodoxy of the sector’s framework that any overt focus on peripheral variables such as class and racial oppression could see the perpetrator avoid responsibility for his actions. Watson (2001) argued that the dominant discourse of the men’s family violence sector appears to have attained the “...status and gaze as described by Foucault (1991) where workers become self-policing in their feminist practice, to the detriment of best practice”
(2001:92). Watson pointed out that to name and factor in class as a significant contribution to the broad context would mean “…stepping out from the dominant discourse of sole responsibility of the man (and the) danger of being accused of (collusion)…in helping him find excuses for his violence” (2001:92). As Kappeler (1995) made clear

not everyone experiencing the same oppression uses violence. That is, these circumstances do not ‘cause’ violent behaviour. They overlook in other words that the perpetrator has decided to violate, even if this decision was made in circumstances of limited choice (1995:3).

However, while structural frameworks must be challenged to in order to end men’s violence in the family and elsewhere, there is a need to address individual men’s behaviour - within the parameters of those structural frameworks - in a manner that acknowledges the impact of those structures on the lives of marginalised men (Pease, 2004).

By applying a rather simplistic gender analysis both Hurst (2001) and Watson (2001), in drawing attention to the impact of class and race on the lives of violent men, appear to have glossed over the broad diversity of feminist analyses as well as the history of feminist writers acknowledging the impact of the intersections of class, ethnicity and gender. Laing (2002) revisited the history of feminist engagement in articulating that “…feminist writing and activism has attempted to grapple with the interaction of gender, race, class and ethnicity in order to more fully understand all the dimensions of the socio-political context in which violence against women occurs” (2002:2). Similarly, Kelly (2002) pointed out that considerable feminist history is ignored if it is not remembered that even in its early waves, there was an acknowledged awareness of differences between women with regards to their standings in ethnicity, class, race and sexuality.
Bograd (1999) noted that the violences of men are not monolithic phenomena as there are often competing forces that shape the foundations of this behaviour. While all men who choose to use violence in the family are in the position of exerting some form of patriarchal oppression, the relationships that men have to patriarchy tend to differ in varying ways depending on how they understand their interweaving within their social and cultural location. Laing (2001), however, noted that broad based services for both men and women appear to have “…failed to address the intersections of race, class, culture and sexual orientation” (2001:4). With a view towards refocusing the argument, Laing (2001) endorsed locating individual and personal responsibility within the context of culturally founded multiple oppressions. There is a need then to ensure that programs and interventions with men who use violence and abuse in the family are able to hear and recognise the impact of class and culture on the men’s lives. As Pease (2004) pondered, it is imperative to enquire of workers “…how they address issues of class...in their work with violent men” (2004:55). This reflection was put to program facilitators.

Q. How do you engage with questions of social class in working with men around their behaviours?

MF1. I don’t really see it as being an issue. The majority of men in the programs, certainly over my experience, have been working class. I don’t know what that says...that the middle class go to private psychologists for anger management and relationships counselling? But I don’t see class on its own as being a useful thing to consider.

MF7. I think it depends on where the group is (geographically located). Primarily I would agree that those are the sorts of people (the working class) we capture. Men with money have a way of buying their way out of the system. They have better lawyers; they’ve got better ways of negotiating and not coming to the attention of the police, of child protection...of other agencies I guess.228

FM1. It’s often somewhat problematic as there’s a certain cohort that continues to be overly represented and that’s working-class men, often lower-income men, or men not in professional employment if

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228 These two responses are interesting. They suggest that money, by implication privilege, is used to manipulate outcomes of interventions and to thus avoid responsibility.
that’s what you mean? We do see more tertiary graduates...but working class men are overly represented. That’s maybe not the point though Pete. We know that violence cuts across class, income, race, sexual orientation etcetera so it’s more a case of working with what’s there and being clear that men’s violence knows no boundaries.

These responses appear to be typical of the broad thinking around the issue of social class. The response from FM1, above, repeats the mantra and dominant discourse of the sector: that violence cuts across differing orientations outside the generic WASP. McKendy’s (1997) observations of a treatment program for batterers raised the disjuncture of the “…rhetorically-established potential universality of the problem (clashing) with the actual highly particularistic patterns” that he was able to observe for himself (1997:144). McKendy stated that

(w)hile I was positioned to see the classlessness of abuse as an ongoing practical accomplishment, the counsellors did not see things this way. To them, class was irrelevant. Operating inside the “ideological circle”, they understood their own activities as being consistent with that “objective fact”. The class backgrounds of the men were seen—but-unnoticed. Only when I posed the question directly did one of the counsellors characterise “the majority” of the men with whom he came in contact as “working poor” (1997:144).

It is important to acknowledge that while McKendy’s (1997) comments are close to a decade and a half old, the point appears to be just as relevant. Other responses were less ambiguous.

MF7. I wouldn’t say class is an issue.

FF3. Can’t see that it’s an issue as any man can use the sorts of behaviours that we see. Class doesn’t matter.

These responses appear to support McKendy’s observations, and again, flow in to the flavour of the sectors’ dominant ideology that “violence cuts across class, income, race, sexual orientation etcetera”. Many feminists have rejected analyses that subsume problems of patriarchy and male privilege under the critique of exploitative class relations that, at times, appear to romanticise a pragmatic and

229 White Anglo Saxon Protestant.
robust working class masculinity. Raising the vexed question of social class can potentially apply the status of victimhood to men also, and it can appear to be used as an excuse for their violent and abusive behaviour. However, while class does not cause violence, it is problematic not to consider the influence that class, and other variables such as ethnicity and culture, have on men’s choices of behaviour\textsuperscript{230,231}.

The diversity of social class amongst men within a program is often influenced by its geographical location. For example, practitioners acknowledge an increase in more educated, professional, middle-class men in and closer to the city. The opportunity for men to access a MBCP after work has increased due to (usually private NGO) agencies recognizing that there is a window of contact and in-flow for men who are able to work back at the office and then attend a city-based program before heading home. Conversely, the dynamic changes in the suburbs where the primary intervention is usually located within a community health centre; and the overwhelming make-up of the program is men from a lower socio / economic / education / employment status. While acknowledging the geographical influence however, it still remains that working-class men are vastly over-represented, and

\textsuperscript{230} It is worth reflecting on how agencies might respond to ethnicity. A recent example of how culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) men were being responded to by agencies was bought to the attention of the peak body, NTV, who was informed that programs were turning away men from accessing programs based on their low proficiency in the English language\textsuperscript{230}. Men who had contacted an agency through being referred on by the Men’s Referral Service (MRS) were re-contacting the MRS and claiming that the agency would not see them even for an assessment due to their limited proficiency in English. This is concerning given that denying the man access would probably mean that his partner and children would be denied the opportunity for support, healing, and safety and risk assessment frameworks that might come through the process of partner contact. It would appear that agencies are not applying or adhering to the practice guidelines in the NTV standards manual with regards to men from CALD backgrounds: that is, that agencies are calling their own plays with regards to the broadness of program admission. While there are resource issues that impact upon this decision, it is problematic to consider that cohorts outside of the overly represented traditional WASP should not be provided with an adequate accessible safety intervention. This action would also appear to be out of step and not consistent with family violence reforms stated through government policy.

\textsuperscript{231} It is noteworthy that the peak body, NTV, has recently hosted a professional education seminar, “Working with Aboriginal men who use violence towards family members” to attempt to address the generic WASP imbalance. This training is facilitated by an indigenous Gunai man. See NTV Notes, January, 2011.
that correlation is not expanded on within a programs’ framework. As Bettman (2009) articulated, while men’s violence against women in the family is ultimately a discursive phenomenon and that patriarchal discourse remains the fount of this behavior, there is a curiosity to acknowledge and make more palpable class - and culture and other forms of marginalization – in the understanding and effective response to men’s family violence.

**Evaluation: defining outcomes and limitations**

As previously mentioned, specific programs for men that were aimed at addressing their violent and abusive behaviours in the family began to appear overseas, predominantly in England and the United States, towards the late 1970s. These were instigated through the activism of advocates working with women who were escaping violence. The particular pragmatism of the time suggested that there could be merit in working with the problem as an adjunct to safety rather than continuing to follow on from a deficit position. Added to this position was that workers were concerned that there were particular dangers in working inappropriately with men who had been, or still were, using violence against their partners and children (Adams, 2000). There are as many differing opinions as to the effectiveness of this method of intervention as there is literature on the many differing approaches taken by practitioners claiming to work towards ending men’s violence and abuse in the family.232

The effectiveness of a program is measured against its goals; the first and most basic of these is being able to “...define the program” (Gondolf, 2002:34), and to decide what it is that is being evaluated as being effective or not. Edelson (1995) suggested

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232 See, for example, Pence, 1989; Edleson and Tolman, 1992; Dankwort, 1993; Pence and Paymar, 1995; Gondolf, 2002; Jackson et al., 2003; Day et al., 2009).
that the goals of intervention with men can range from reducing violent behaviour shown by “…statistically significant changes in a desired direction by all participants”, through to encouraging men to “…take social action against the woman-battering culture” (1995:2).

Melvin (2001) suggested that researching the effectiveness of MBCPs as a response to men’s family violence has been a difficult task due to limitations in designing evaluation strategies. There are two main possible explanations for this. One is that the evaluations were methodologically flawed; the other is that the design of the programs themselves maybe flawed. These two explanations may not be necessarily mutually exclusive (Jackson et al., 2003), as Melvin (2001) proposed that “...(c)ertainty about successful outcomes is confounded by too many inherent program variables” (2001:34). Studies often share a number of methodological flaws including sample drop out and attrition, minimal or no standardisation of program delivery, and difficulty in following up victim satisfaction. For many reasons, even if programs receive sufficient levels of funding to conduct well-designed evaluations, many researchers have concluded that these processes and instruments may fail to provide evidence of program effectiveness due to the multi-factorial structure that constitutes an effective outcome233. It is well worth remembering that programs for men are not designed as treatment234 in the traditional ‘disease’ sense of the word, and intervention in a counselling paradigm only makes sense if abuse stems from a remediable deficit in personality, knowledge or belief. Abusing and assaulting women is not an addiction. The bottom line for Stark (2007:69) is that

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233 This has been an ongoing issue for evaluation. Again, to quote Melvin (2001), “…(t)he situating of (the men’s program) within other interventions proved problematic for the Family Violence intervention and Research Project (FVIRP: A Study in Hope) as it was impossible to separate out the effect of the group from the other interventions”(2001:35).

234 The word ‘treatment’ is problematic as this borrows from addictive and predatory literature based more in a criminal justice framework. It is not terminology that is used in the Australian sector; though Day et al. (2009b), in identifying their therapeutic biases, use it frequently.
that counselling for men who use violence and abuse “…might make sense if it significantly reduced women’s immediate pain and suffering”\textsuperscript{235}.

Day et al. (2009a) suggested that irrespective of other debates in this area which potentially sideline the real issue of violence prevention\textsuperscript{236}, any violence intervention with men should be able to demonstrate that it leads to reductions in the intensity and / or frequency of aggressive and violent behavior. Day et al. suggested that “…on these grounds alone, it would appear that many current domestic violence programs would not meet the criteria of offender rehabilitation program accreditation systems currently used in some form or other by correctional services around the Western world” (2009a: 206).

Many - if not all - programs rely to some degree on measures of self-reporting by the participants. Many men have reported at the completion of a program that it has had a profound effect upon them: that is, they often leave the program with an increased awareness of their behaviour being a problem, greater confidence in their capacity to take responsibility for their behaviour, and self-reporting that they hold less violence-supporting attitudes than pre-group (Day et al., 2009b:200). However, activists and facilitators caution against reading too much into this reporting as it comes at a time of heightened surveillance and intense intervention; and as Gondolf (2002) pointed out, is not backed up by recidivist research. That said, as the following responses demonstrate, program facilitator’s value the immediacy of feedback from end of program self-reports, and suggest that it has validity.

Q. How much influence do end-of-group self-report evaluations have on the issue of whether groups ‘work’ or not?

\textsuperscript{235} Does this equate to safety?

\textsuperscript{236} For example, responsibility and blame, reciprocity in partner violence, and the prevalence of male victimisation.
The evaluations usually back up what I witness in a group. You can tell when men have met with facing the consequences of their actions. Their demeanour changes and they are usually quieter and more reflective as the penny drops.

They’re very useful. They give immediate feedback about what worked and what didn’t.

They’re very useful. They give immediate feedback about what worked and what didn’t.

This correlates, matches with partner feedback?

Not all the time, but we’re only starting and for most blokes there’s a fair way to go

Often not no, but I think that it takes a little while to filter down.

How long would it be reasonable to wait for a message to “...filter down” given the reasons that men are in the program in the first place: given that the intervention is about safety? Self-reports do not match with partner feedback “...all the time” as MM5 suggested. Self-reports of violent and abusive behaviours by men commonly minimise the amount of violence being experienced by their partners, and it is not uncommon to find that women describe more frequent and severe levels of all forms of abuse (Frances, 1997; Costello, 2006). Various self-reporting tools may focus on physical abuse and overlook a range of more subtle psychological or controlling forms of violence. Any self-report measures can be easily, though sometimes unconsciously, distorted and are unreliable from a scientific research perspective (Jean & Reynolds, 1984); and “...men have a vested interest in reporting that they have made positive changes or in other ways responding (to the evaluation) in a socially desirable manner” (Day et al., 2009b:200).

While incorporating Day’s (op cit.) understanding into my practice, my own position is that I find them to be a cautiously useful piece of the puzzle in constructing a picture of the man. They are a part of links to partner feedback, pre-group interviews, legal commitments, a therapist’s curiosity, an eye for group dynamics, and professional experience. Many of my colleagues would concur.
A number of earlier evaluative research projects have focused on Victorian behaviour change programs. Most of these authors agree that participants who complete a group program are likely to have reduced their violent behaviour to some extent as a result of that participation – although the issue of what ‘reduction of violence’ means for the woman, and prevention at the structural level, needs to be considered. While there have been considerations of evaluating behaviour change over the time frame of a program, there is little research about measuring, or predicting, a man’s future violence, and no way of guaranteeing safety. Other research is inconclusive, or else suggests that little changes through a man’s participation in a program. For example, Costello (1997) observed that while women were positive about men’s groups, she noted that this was in the context of ongoing abuse in 40% of cases. However, it might be the case that one of the more robust advantages of a men’s behaviour change group is that it may act as a focus of action against men’s violence individually, educationally and politically (Lees & Lloyd, 1994).

Effective evaluation of behaviour change programs is particularly problematic for several other reasons outside of methodology. First, this is political work. The sector is strongly grounded in very clearly aligned beliefs and assumptions about the treatment of women and about the genesis of that behaviour. Thus, it would appear that evaluation and research outcomes are usually followed by political considerations and implications for the work. Second, regardless of how it might be

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238 See, for example, Frances, 1996, Russell and Jory, 1997, or Melvin et al., 1999.
239 Gondolf’s (1999:41) research (involving mandated programs) is notable here in that “batterers’ partners were interviewed by phone every 3 months over a 15-month follow-up after intake, with a response rate of 77% overall”. It is prudent to note that the cost involved in this would have been considerable; thus, the difficulties in funding longer-term evaluation.
240 See, for example, Murphy & Ting, 2010:26-44.
241 My emphasis.
242 As mentioned frequently, behaviour that is occurring under the umbrella of male privilege and patriarchal attitudes and beliefs.
measured, there is considerable disagreement over what it is that is actually being measured. Is a total cessation of physical violence the datum by which ‘success’ is judged? Threats, verbal violence / abuse similarly? What about coercive control Stark (2007) would ask; or male privilege that is manifest through domestic dodging and gender role presumption as Ashcraft (2000) would enquire? Over what time frame should / would this be measured? Third, as the focus of this is safety, it must be asked if evaluation in any way poses a threat to women and children’s safety. For example, Gondolf (2002) questioned the possibility of program attendees seeking to retaliate against their partner for reporting on-going violent or abusive behaviour or perhaps for non-compliance with intervention orders.

A recent briefing paper through Respect enquired as to what constituted success in a MBCP (Westmarland, Kelly, & Chalder-Mills (2010). This research concluded that success means much more than just ending the violence, and argued for a more nuanced understanding of success in which more subtle, life enhancing changes are recognised. That women wanted more than just the stopping of violence and abuse is poignant. This was reflected particularly in their desires that extended personal space be acknowledged, and recognition be given of their isolation (support for / or decreased).

In one of the most thorough evaluations on mandated programs, Gondolf (2002) tabled data on men’s behaviour and partner feedback over 48 months, a considerable time to document change - or otherwise, and as previously mentioned, at

243 For a discussion on ‘success’ or ‘positive outcomes’ of a program see, for example, Westmarland, Kelly, & Chalder-Mills (2010).
244 In the United Kingdom.
245 For a thoughtful discussion of Respect’s (2010) argument see Vlais (2010), where he raises, reflects and connects with Stark’s concept of “coercive control”.
246 Again, this research, unlike Gondolf’s, does not deal with court-mandated programs.
considerable cost. This research concluded that approximately 47% of all men who commenced the programs re-assaulted their partners at least once over the four year period, and one quarter, 25%, repeatedly assaulted their partners throughout the follow up period. The probability of re-assault declined significantly after the initial 9 months, and it was reported that by the 30th and 48th month follow-up 85% of the women interviewed claimed to feel “very safe”, they believed that it would be “very unlikely” that they would be assaulted again, and they rated their quality of life to be improved overall. It is also worth mentioning that this research concluded that there were lower rates of assault – 28% versus 39% - against new partners than against initial partners. These findings suggest that intervention may be responsible for reducing violence and abuse in the long term, if not lead to some degree of immediate cessation of physical violence. The key point noted here is the presence of on-going surveillance of the man, and criminal sanctions for non-compliance; considerations that voluntary MBCPs do not, and cannot, factor in.

Murphy and Ting (2010) concluded from a review of ‘batterer intervention program’ outcome studies that there was considerable diversity in stated outcomes. Their review suggested that

(t)he most favourable conclusion...is that (batterer programs) have a significant and substantial average benefit in reducing partner-violence recidivism...The least favourable conclusion is that (batterer programs) have no significant effect in reducing partner violence relative to minimal treatment or legal monitoring controls. The...broadest set of studies and...extensive set of comparisons...produced a middle-ground conclusion, namely that (batterer programs)...have a small, positive effect in reducing partner violence (2010:33).

Murphy and Ting (2010) argued, notwithstanding this problematic evidence base, for the need for program providers to both innovate and enhance standard

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247 This might be due to the shorter exposure time of the new relationship.
interventions and, particularly, that these innovations be evaluated<sup>248</sup>. While there is a small degree of optimism in these conclusions, major issues with voluntary MBCPs concern the rates of attendance, and drop out: simply, the vast majority of those referred to a voluntary behaviour change group never appear, and less than 20% complete the program. As Stark (2007) poignantly noted, it is problematic to rely on an intervention “…that leaves anywhere from 50% to 80% of the small minority of victims who get the law’s attention at extreme risk”<sup>249</sup> (2007:70).

There would appear to be considerable merit in a re-framing of perpetrator intervention to acknowledge that it also provides the opportunity, as previously highlighted, for on-going surveillance of the man. As previously mentioned, Healey, Smith, & O'Sullivan (1998) noted that some practitioners and criminal justice professionals are beginning to regard any form of batterer intervention<sup>250</sup> as a proxy for intensive probation. While there may or may not be the influence of the curriculum that deters re-offending over time, at least during the program participation men can potentially be monitored closely<sup>251</sup>, and their partners are receiving program contact and appropriate support referrals. Healey et al. (1998) suggested that this heightened vigilance with regard to the man’s behavior and his partner’s safety and welfare is compatible with criminal justice goals. However, theoretical compatibility with the criminal justice system is not the only important factor in selecting an appropriate intervention. On a practical level they suggest that interventions must be able to retain men within the program<sup>252</sup>, and address any obstacles to program participation (1998: 28).

<sup>249</sup> My emphasis.
<sup>250</sup> Their language.
<sup>251</sup> This cannot happen in voluntary programs.
<sup>252</sup> They use the terminology “treatment”.
The terminology used here, “…that interventions must be able to retain men within the program” (Healey et al., 1998:28), is important in that there is a site of contention with regards to potential collusion. Many facilitators acknowledge that there is a very fine line between holding back a challenge to a man’s stated viewpoint, and colluding with him through not saying anything in the fear that he will leave the group or retreat into non-compliance, silence or indignation. Facilitators will often lean to the side of caution with the ambition of holding the man in the group and giving him more exposure to the program in the hope that he will ‘come around’ to a position of compliance and acceptance of the desired standpoint: that is, that he will come to accept the facilitators’ mantra. The following engagement reflects on the issues inherent in challenging within the program a man’s behaviour.

Q. Is there a tension between holistically challenging a man on the spot and the risk of that challenge offending him and him then leaving the group or becoming non-contributory?

MF1. There’s a danger in not challenging him. That’s a big call that’s made in each situation at the time. There is a tension I guess as you call it, but the longer a bloke stays in the program the more opportunity there is to work on him.

Q. You would do your best to hang onto him and thus sometimes wouldn’t challenge him?

MM2. Sometimes no…that is, not fully, but I need to work with him where he’s at, and that often means a softly softly approach. It’s vital that we hang on to him. I know where you’re heading. Collusion’s a pretty strong word Pete!

Collusion is indeed a very strong word, and there appear to be well-justified fears and concerns that this may take place within programs. I concur with the “…need to work with (the man) where he’s at”, but again that support is in need of a caveat. Various organisations facilitate ‘anger management’ groups within the

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253 These organisations are not under the NTV umbrella. However, one organisation under the gaze of the peak body does offer ‘anger management for women’. 233
community that focus on the emotion of anger and its management, as well as men’s pain, grief and suffering which they regard as being causal influences on the man’s behaviour. Often this is coupled to a quasi religious framework that attempts to provide a non-threatening safe environment where men can recognise their emotions and be nurtured into respectful relationships and non-violence. This is similar to the flavour and language expressed in the MATES GROUP and On-Going Change brochures to which I referred previously, where up-skilling men in the areas of emotional expression and assertiveness, and healing their pain assists them to end their violence. To my mind, it is very important that men address the pain and suffering that exists in their lives, though I struggle with this being the initial focus on the way to stop their violence. Given the all-too-pervasive influence of collusion, it would seem prudent to work with the pain only after the violence has stopped, and to clearly distinguish the structured stopping-violence intervention from the therapeutic process.

It appears that programs will always be better served through considering more clinically the man’s readiness to change\(^{254}\), and the response by MF1 (above) alludes to this. McMaster (2006) suggested that if men are not engaged and retained in programs then there is a high probability that they are not only likely to re-offend, but to do so at higher rates: not good for their partners and children. Theories that focus on understanding the stages of individual change suggest that the man will change his behavior only when he is ready to change. McMaster (2006) made the point that readiness to change (responsivity) “…is a multi-layered phenomenon that, along with the individual man, includes responsivity of workers, organizational structures, and the wider (integrated) systems” (2006:3). Confrontational approaches

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\(^{254}\) See, for example, Hellman, Johnson and Dobson (2010) regarding MBCP participants’ readiness to change.
to challenging the man’s behaviour frequently enable the man to reposition himself as either a victim of her behaviour – such as ‘she pushed my buttons’ - or as a victim of the criminal and legal systems. It would appear to be counter-productive and misguided to expect a man to participate fully if there are initial barriers such as mandatory attendance, for example, to his presence in the group\textsuperscript{255}. The consequences of this range from belligerence, indignation, ongoing violence and abuse, greater recidivism, and much higher dropout rates - all of which equate to decreased safety for women and children. Pogue (1998) detailed how his extensive method of engaging men through

approximately seven hours of individual and group intake / assessment\textsuperscript{256} (was so successful) that rates of attrition were so low as to be insignificant or non-existent in most groups. (However) where client’s (attendance did cease), they were in most instances clients who had been mandated by the courts to attend\textsuperscript{257} (1998:386).

There is danger in reading too much in to these results. Pogue (1998) was only prepared to work with men who could demonstrate to his satisfaction considerable motivation, and they were only admitted to the group if substantial checks and balances measured up. Thus, there is somewhat of a biased sample that is being tabled here. However, even after interventions as considerable as this, for men who are not ready to change simply mandating attendance at a program may be ineffective. Some MBCPs may be effective for some men who are ready and open to change, but the indignant and those men who are not yet ready may require other interventions\textsuperscript{258}. Again, given that this work is about safety, other interventions may include - though not be limited to - the full weight of state-sanctioned and enforced probation and surveillance: as one of the more poignant challenges might lie in

\textsuperscript{255} See, for example, Jewell and Wormith (2010) who conducted a meta-analysis of 30 studies that provided data on the variables that were associated with men dropping out of a MBCP prior to its completion.

\textsuperscript{256} This is just to be allowed admission in to the group.

\textsuperscript{257} Pogue (1998) stated that their court mandated attendance was for ‘anger management’.

\textsuperscript{258} See for example, Daniels and Murphy (1997), Murphy and Baxter (1997) or Fawcett, Heise, Espegel, and Pick, (1999).
being able to identify, apprehend and contain those men who do not respond to intervention.

Containing a man within a program is one matter, whether or not programs are ‘successful’ in achieving their desired outcomes is another. The question of success was posed to interviewees who responded in the following terms.

Q. So, do they work?

MM3. Yes, otherwise I wouldn’t be doing the work. They provide the space and the opportunity that men wouldn’t have otherwise. Often seeds are being sown for later germination as well.

MF7. Yes. The research shows that the violence usually stops. If the man is prepared to change, he will. It’s his choice. It’s up to him.

FF2. They’re the best we can do at the moment.

MF4. Oh yes. You can see the effect upon a man when he gets the message; you can see the shame, the penny drop, the lights come on. You can see that now the journey’s really started for him. And that change process continues.

Again, this is an intervention – “...the best that we can do” - that targets an individual man at chosen individual behaviour that has its grounding and genesis in the socio / cultural frameworks of society. It may be useful to reflect on how long is it feasible (and safe) to wait for “...later germination” or for “...the penny to drop”? Participants stated interpretation of ‘success’ is processed, controlled and disseminated through the procedure of discursive framing which I discussed in chapter five. As suggested, framing is vital in ascertaining the perspectives, predispositions and prejudices that impact on the way that all participants interpret and interact within the politics of their professional discourse (Ross, 2000). Framing is a paradigm for analysing how discourses are intertextually and representatively woven - by prejudiced actors no less. As Rein and Schon (1993) proposed, this calls upon a relational context; new framing must be critiqued alongside entrenched
professional predispositions. This poses a difficulty though, in that frames are regarded as part of the taken-for-granted; that which is not questioned. That is, these programs work; that is why we do them!

In questioning MBCP intervention and its effectiveness, Stark (2007) reflected as to why providing counselling (sic) to men “…is a better mechanism to expand women’s choices than incarcerating men and providing enhanced advocacy and resources to women?” (2007:68). However, in again considering structural location, perhaps the last word goes to Gondolf (2002:34) who proposed that the ‘effectiveness’ of the behaviour change group intervention – which is the primary focus of the majority of evaluations, “…may depend (more) on the entire supporting infrastructure and not be distinct from it”259.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has described and analysed how language can be used to locate authenticity and authority within text production. Discourse practice - in referring to both the sociocognitive components of text production, and how various agents and agencies produce and interpret text - is an integral dimension of critical discourse analysis as texts should not be disseminated from an analysis of the cultural context in which they are embedded. This takes place in the context of bureaucracies, hierarchies and institutions, and there is a need to examine how agencies and actors both produce and interpret texts within this setting as interpretation is linked to the axioms upon which actors lay their credentials.

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259 My emphasis.
This chapter considered the dynamics and context involved in the naming of various components of this intervention. Much power is located in the naming process, and in this chapter I reflected on the naming of some of the impacts of this behaviour. By what terminology is it appropriate / useful to refer to those using controlling behaviour, or those upon whom this behaviour is inflicted? I also reflected further on whether all forms of domestic / family oppression and gender injustice are best seated under the terminology ‘violence’.

There have been considerable concerns raised about the use of anger management as an appropriate intervention with men who perpetrate violence and abuse in the family. Anger management has become a core component of the curriculum of the vast majority of programs despite it being argued that most workers would state their position as being that violence and abuse is not necessarily driven by anger, and that men have a choice.

How agencies and programs ‘sell their product’ is a clear indication of exactly where their philosophies, politics and practice are grounded. Public statements of rhetorical positioning are about the location of the intervention within the parameters of the discourse, and as such they highlight the various ways in which agents attempt to establish jurisdiction over their expression of authenticity and authority within the sector. This chapter critiqued the advertising material of four randomly selected programs to analyse how the claimed theoretical and philosophical frameworks are portrayed through the publically-stated rhetoric.

The intersections of variables such as class and culture are generally not responded to within groups as practitioners fear these variables being used to excuse and deny a
man’s obligation to take responsibility for his behaviour. However, working-class men appear to be vastly over-represented in group demographics, and men from non-Anglo cultures are considerably under-represented. While variables such as class and culture do not imply a causal relationship with men’s family violence, it may appear problematic not to consider how these structural variables may contribute to the influence on the individual man.

The difficulties involved in evaluating the effectiveness of men’s behaviour change programs are considerable. This chapter considered previous evaluations and the methodological limitations and shortcomings of these, as well as the hurdles involved in defining what it is that is being evaluated, and how the measurement of outcomes may be recorded. This chapter reflected on attempts to retain the man within the program so as to continue with the dynamic required for the change process to be more effective. I questioned the vexed issue of the place of end-of-group participant evaluation that is often in opposition to partner feedback: evaluation which clearly is also not able to demonstrate whether the magnitude of a twelve / sixteen week engagement is sufficient to bring about real and lasting changes in behaviour. A focus on repeat physical violence would seem to be an insufficient limit to evaluation as even when (if) physical violence and abuse ceases, many women report high(er) levels of fear and entrapment where the physical abuse has been replaced by mental and emotional torment and coercive control (Stark, 2007:72).
CHAPTER 8

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT, VOLUNTARY MODEL

Introduction

In this chapter I consider how MBCPs are interwoven with the agenda and frameworks of the state. Greig (2001) proposed that the psychological and behavioural emphases of the discourses of family violence have tended to depoliticise discussion of these connections, confining attention to gender questions of masculine identity but neglecting the political questions of what it means for men to take responsibility for ethical and just relationships (2001:2). Initially I consider the interplay and relevance of poststructuralism for understanding the state’s policy agendas for family violence intervention. Poststructuralist frameworks elucidate policy making processes on several levels. They recognise the existence of multiple realities within any discursive context, and they also recognise the dynamic of resistance within institutional power relationships.

While support and criticism for MBCPs as a response to men’s family violence has become progressively polarised in the domestic violence literature (see for example, Geffner, 1995; Goldner, 2001; Gondolf, 2002, Oberin, 2006), there are bigger
questions that are frequently raised in relation to the state’s participation in, and contribution to, the sector and the issues of intervention. The state, and in particular agencies of the state that are under the authority and control of men, has gradually conceded particular responses to the violences of men against women, “...thus (sponsoring) particular social forms within the private domains”. (Of concern is that) “…legal and other state constructions of violence have generally served to play down its significance and to limit its definition” (Hearn, 1998:10). Incrementally, and slowly, the private privileges and power that men experience at many and varied levels have been opened up to the scrutiny and often the intervention of the state. Definitions of violence are impacted on through the means by which state agencies, the law and other institutions engage with historical constructions of violence. This engagement influences current and future policies on interventions aimed at men’s violence’s towards women, as the state structures definitions through both inclusion and exclusion of real or potential consequences. This is in tension with greater increased public awareness and acknowledgement of the problem of men’s violence and abuse in the family within the criminal and legal systems and in policy implementation.

In order for the state to get its message across sufficiently so as to attempt to control the discourses of violence it must construct its subjectivities within a sympathetic environment, or one in which it at least has the control. According to Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999), the institutional format of discourse practice and formulation is important as institutions have internal logics that can be reduced neither to abstract structures nor to pockets of events and occurrences. It appears pertinent to critically consider how the state both constructs and ‘sells’ subjectivities to the masses.
In analysing men’s violence and abuse in the family – gendered behaviour, it is important to remember that the state and its tangential and interwoven organisations and interventions are themselves gendered. Men substantially dominate politics, management, legal, military, professional, and criminal justice positions within society. As the state can incorporate and manifest the binaries of empowerment and oppression it is difficult not to enquire how agents of the state can forge protocols that do not reinforce or perpetuate oppression.

As some manifestations of behaviours are criminal, it would seem appropriate to consider concerns that interventions with men will be used to avoid criminal sanctions. Concerns have been expressed that the reliance on MBCPs will usurp the criminal justice system as the primary intervention and referral for men’s violence’s within the family (Stark, 2007). Activists amongst the women’s sector have questioned the extent to which the intervention of a men’s behaviour change program highlights rather than minimises the criminality of the violent and abusive behaviour. Others have reflected on whether the responsibility for punishing men who use violence and abuse in the family rests not with the man’s partner, but with the state (Woodbridge, 2000).

There is considerable danger in any MBCP – whose claimed ambition is to stop violence - operating in isolation. Aside from the obvious importance of transparency and accountability for safety reasons, there are fears that criminal behaviour will not be treated as such, and that programs will be used as a ‘soft sentencing’ option. It is also pertinent to consider how wider non-criminal behaviours of men can be addressed within the criminal justice system.
This chapter concludes by considering where MBCPs are placed in contributing or otherwise to social and structural change. If “…one reason that domestic violence continues to flourish is because of the ways (in which) society implicitly accepts and condones disrespect of and violence towards women” (Klein, 1997:88), then men’s programs need to move “…beyond the gender question of what it means to be a man to the political question of what it means to create a just and less violent world” (Greig, 2001:11).

**Poststructuralism and state policy**

It is useful to consider how the associated poststructural notions of meaning and discourse are applied to the process of state intervention and policy making. Edelman (1988) suggested that as politics is experienced through language, the concept of ‘real’ power within the state’s policy formation rests in the varying processes whereby issues requiring intervention are constructed and articulated. The explicit – or implicit – categorisation relating to how the problem at hand should be confronted is contained within its representation. As I have previously mentioned, power is not brought to bear without some form of challenge and / or resistance. As Fairclough (1989) suggested, those involved in the policy formation processes are not passive in their roles; the policy actors have access to frameworks through which they can act as moral agents. Poststructuralism enables the various discourses to be positioned as theoretical frameworks and categories for ascertaining in what ways these actors are located vis-à-vis other institutions and key players. While poststructuralist frameworks can elucidate the complexities of realities within a discursive milieu, they also pay homage to the various manifestations of resistance that occur within institutional power dynamics.
Poststructuralism highlights such variables as the unique perceptions of individual actors, the vagaries of social power, and socially constructed discursive meanings. Again, the study of language is important here, as it is used with deliberate intent by all involved agents to construct and debate policy issues and solutions from a self-interested standpoint. While on the surface this may seem obvious, Fairclough (1995) suggested that the influence of language on reshaping and/or camouflaging social frameworks and identities is often bypassed by those responsible for policy scrutiny. If it is accepted, as Torfing (1999) proposed, that state-sanctioned policies are not taken-for-granted objective realities, then what is constructed as a social problem with a corresponding solution is contingent within history, society and culture. Contingent interpretations are inherently dynamic discursive frameworks that require differing engagements and strategies to legitimise decisions and to ensure their acceptance by all involved stakeholders. Yeatman (2000) suggested that the discursive hegemonic discourses contribute significantly to this process, particularly in relation to the competing fabrications of the isolated issue and its associated interpretation of solution. Within any specific discursive circumstance or context, both language and meaning are constantly dynamic and meanings – stated or implied - are open to change. An interpretive paradigm is justified as it acknowledges the context-specific character of meaning.

Accordingly, a diversity of competing discourses structures and frames the communicative process that is policy making. As there are disparate resolutions for competing policy actors, the degree to which each faction either complies with or challenges and confronts the dominant hegemonic discourse is crucial to gaining an understanding of the power dynamics that exist within the policy making procedure. As Pinch (1998) argued, the dominant discourses that are produced through the
machinations of the state are, in essence, arrived at through the means by which agents view themselves. This leaves these discourses open to a range of influences, and the potential to be both malleable, and at times fragile.

Various and competing agents involved in this process have their own ‘barrows to push’, as they are engaged at various times in advancing their own unique interpretation of the issue at hand and, more particularly, their desired outcome. While agents are motivated to ensure that their own agendas and positions become the dominant discourse, they are just as motivated in quelling opposition from dissenting voices. Edelman (1988) proposed that

(t)he strategic need is to immobilize opposition and mobilise support. While coercion and intimidation help to check resistance in all political systems, the key tactic must always be the evocation of interpretations that legitimise favoured courses of action and threaten or reassure people so as to encourage them or to remain quiescent. Allocation of benefits must themselves be infused with meanings: whose well being does a policy threaten and whose does it enhance? (1988:104).

As Colebatch (1998) suggested, “…(i)n this sense the problem and the participants are mutually constitutive: the one reinforces the other” (1998:27). Thus, from the perspective of a poststructural analysis, scrutiny is targeted at both policy outcomes and the involvement by all agents who contribute to augmenting and realising these outcomes.

**Men’s violence in the context of the state**

Men’s violence and abuse in the family is interwoven in many and varied ways with the agendas of context, structures and processes of the state. Men’s violence is transferred into a state-sanctioned source of reference that includes various rules for language, delineated hierarchies and the relationships between state-funded agencies and clients. The complexity throughout this is that the dominant framework of
men’s violence and abuse in the family is constructed as a private issue “…albeit through public discourse” (Hearn, 1998:178).

The state is gendered; that is, a masculine institution. As previously mentioned, the vast majority of senior positions in the military, business, law, politics and academia are men because, as Connell (1995) articulated, “…there is a gender configuring of recruitment and promotion, a gender configuring of the division of labour and systems of control, a gender configuring of policy making, practical routines, and ways of mobilising pleasure and consent” (1995:73). The marshalling of violences embodies what Hearn (1998) referred to as

a web of men’s managements of violence, structured through an impressive, overlapping collection of professional cultures (that are) dominated by men. In the case of domestic violence there is the added complication that this has itself become a possible specialisation for women within organizational hierarchies which remain dominated by men (1998:178-9).

It would seem, thus, worthwhile enquiring as to how the institutional reproduction of gender in policies of the state relates to wider structural changes in gender relations?

The state exercises violence and defines what is legitimate violence and illegitimate violence. The violence machines of the state – the military, the police, the prison system – augment state law with justified violence framed within hierarchical structures. It claims pre-emption on violence in order to keep safe both its borders and the general population, and to impose boundaries on individual behaviour. In so doing it acts as the instrument of regulation seeking to perpetuate, as Hall suggested, “…particular configuration(s) of power relationships” (1984:22). These relationships, each involving a different relationship to violence, arbitrate social order through the police, the law, the judicial system and the various agencies which are involved in metering out interventions at the personal level. State responses to
the violences of men within the family setting – and elsewhere - involve varying degrees of reciprocity, responsibility and interaction with these key institutions and other agents. Different agencies meet violence on differing levels including definitions of violence, desired outcomes of intervention, the means by which to procure them, as well as various ideologies that underpin their frameworks of practice. Dankworth (1988) suggested that more radical practices and ideologies - those inconsistent with the incumbent thinking and policy direction of the day - are diluted or subordinated. Thus, the interests of the ‘power elite’ (Mills, 1956) prevail within male-dominant hierarchical ideologies at the expense of what Hearn referred to as “…innovation and (in particular) women-centred work, practice and policies” (1998:179).

Connell (1995) proposed that the interweaving of masculinity and violence cannot be understood at the personal level without an appreciation of the global connection. Anglo-American masculinities were deeply implicated in the world-wide violence through which Western culture became dominant. Correspondingly, diversities across agencies also occur in relation to the locating of men’s violence as a personal integration of a man’s masculinity or as external to it.

**Intersecting with the criminal justice system**

Given the criminality of some manifestations of violent and abusive behaviours, it is appropriate to consider the feminist concerns that ‘men’s stopping violence interventions’ will be used to avoid criminal sanctions. Various concerns have been raised that the status of MBCPs will usurp the criminal justice system as the primary intervention and referral for men’s family violence. Key women’s sector

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260 This research did not interview participants involved in court-mandated programs.
agents have questioned the extent to which the programs intervention contributes to “…(highlighting) the criminality of the violent and abusive behaviour\textsuperscript{261} rather than (minimising) it” (NMCHS, 1997:13). Compared with other countries, criminal proceedings from assault charges in the family have been relatively rare in Australia (Holder, 1999; PADV, 2003). Many women do not follow through with criminal charges against their partners for many and varied reasons. For many women, a prison sentence given to their partners can be a pyrrhic victory for them as they lose their source of income and their provider. Other women do not press charges as they feel threatened and in danger of retribution from the man. Denborough (1996) pointed out that the experience of many women has been that upon release from prison their partners increased their attempts to control and dominate them. It has been argued\textsuperscript{262} that there needs to be greater intervention from the state and, as Clark, Burt, Schulte, & Maguire (1996) suggested, “…the responsibility for punishing perpetrators of domestic violence should rest not with the victim...(but with the state)” (1996:93).

After nearly 20 years of research designed to test the effects of arrest on intimate partner violence, there is debate as to the effectiveness of arrest as a deterrent of men’s violent behaviours in the family over such informal, therapeutic methods as on-scene counselling or temporary separation. McGregor and Hopkins (1991) argued that while the charges may not be followed through, the impact of contact with the state often acted as a deterrent to the man’s future behaviours. Berk and Newton (1995) proposed that arrest is more likely to have a significant impact on the number of future incidents of violence. Dobash et al. (2000) expressed ambivalence suggesting that the situation was not clear-cut and that it may be that the process of

\textsuperscript{261} Not all abusive behaviours are criminal.
\textsuperscript{262} See, for example, Gondolf (2002) or Laing (2002).
“...arrest works far better for some...offenders than others, and in some kinds of situations better than others” (2000:2)\textsuperscript{263, 264}.

Always the pragmatist, however, Gondolf (2002) argued that perpetrators running into the criminal justice system should have every reason to be concerned - and consequently adjust their behaviour - as they are then under the surveillance and gaze of the state\textsuperscript{265}. As Healy et al. (1998) pointed out, there are groups of advocates and criminal justice professionals who regard any form of intervention as a proxy for intensive probation. For the duration of a program (assuming that he attends\textsuperscript{266}), men are being monitored and their partners are receiving some form of contact and referral. This heightened vigilance and surveillance in regards to the man’s behaviour and the woman’s safety is compatible with a feminist analysis and with criminal justice outcomes as the primary and secondary goals of a program should be to ensure safety and to hold the perpetrator responsible. Healy et al. (1998) emphasised that, at the very least, every intervention must be effective in monitoring the man’s behaviour during the program, as partners are much more likely to stay

\textsuperscript{263} It is useful to mention an international endeavour, collectively known as the National Institute of Justice’s (NIJ) Spouse Assault Replication Program (SARP), that was initiated and undertaken to address this question in the United States. These field experiments were designed to test empirically whether arrests deterred subsequent violence better than less formal alternatives. The Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment (MDVE) found that arresting batterers reduced by half the rate of subsequent offences against the same victim within a 6-month follow-up period. After replication experiments were completed results were reported that in three studies, offenders assigned to the arrest group had higher levels of repeat offending (recidivism). In the other three studies, a statistically significant but modest reduction was found among batterers assigned to arrest. Thus, rather than providing results that were consistent with MDVE, the published results from the replication experiments produced inconsistent findings about whether arrest deters intimate partner violence. Because of the inconsistent and conditional findings generated by the replication experiments, researchers interested in the validity of deterrence theories, and policymakers working to reduce intimate partner violence, have become less confident about relying on arrest as the primary response to violence between intimates (Maxwell, Garner & Fagan, 2001).

\textsuperscript{264} A recent Victorian sector initiative has seen the development of the Men’s Referral Service After-Hours Service. When police attend at a ‘domestic disturbance’ they take the man’s contact number and fax that through to the MRS. The service then contacts the man and discusses the incident and what options might be available.

\textsuperscript{265} Others somewhat sceptically question the effectiveness and commitment with police responses. See, for example, Hatty (1988), Holder, (1999) or Keys Young (2000).

\textsuperscript{266} I refer to the previous chapters’ engagement with effectiveness of these programs where I noted that the considerable majority of those referred do not complete the program.
with men who are in a group or other intervention. With this perspective in mind “…batterer intervention is a public safety program, not treatment; you must keep the focus on (partner) safety. Otherwise, the criminal justice system is only offering the batterer a safe haven to escape the consequences of his offence” (Healy, et al., 1998:10).

Tifft (1993), in echoing feminist concerns of the focus of intervention being misplaced, suggested that to criminalise the perpetrator “…does not change the social organisation or cultural context within which (violence and abuse) takes place” (1993:133). There is, although, as Tifft pointed out, a strong symbolism in the criminalisation of men’s family violence as it states that it is as serious as other forms of violence and any acceptance of that violence may be undercut. I re-state that this research is dealing with predominantly voluntary programs that are located primarily within the health and community sectors as opposed to the criminal justice sector. There is considerable debate concerning the advantages and limitations of voluntary versus mandated programs for men who use violence and abuse in the family. While the Australian report National Crime Prevention (1999) noted that “…the question of whether mandated programs are more successful in stopping abuse than (are) voluntary programs remains unanswered in the literature”, their preferred position was that mandated programs that were integrated with the criminal justice system were the more appropriate intervention (1999:184). The same report found that those involved in the voluntary sector were either ambivalent or simply hostile and demonstrating of a culture of resistance to court-mandated programs (1999:66). In citing reasons such as “…the appropriate time and manner of integration back into the wider community,…responsibility and ownership of particular clients, and financial responsibility for the provision of programs”, the
peak body, NTV, stated “…that all mandated clients should initially attend a…group provided by the (mandating) government department, (and that) program focused groups offered by V-NET members will admit mandated clients to a maximum of 20% of participants” (V-NET, 1995:23-4). Interviewees were asked about their views on working with mandated men in a non-criminal justice setting; a voluntary program.

MM7. It’s pretty simple…..there are too many issues that impact on the group, and for that matter, my time. There are reporting procedures which can be problematic enough, there are government agencies to work with – or against, and I simply couldn’t be bothered. Let their own people look after them.

FF2. It’s not that I don’t want to work with mandated men it’s just that the work can be hard enough and I’m not prepared to push the envelope further. There’s an entirely different dynamic with the mandated fellows…bigger power issues because they’ve been ordered to be there...and too many can be and are very disruptive. Sometimes you feel like you’re minding a client for the government.

These comments echo a lot of sentiment regarding working with mandated clients ‘versus’ voluntary attendees. There is a different dynamic due to the participants’ enforced presence in the program, and facilitator feel that can be very hard work to engage the participants: they must choose to be there. NTV has argued that “…men must choose to embrace change (as) any attempt to force them to change is a misuse of power and control” (NTV, 2001:16). Voluntary programs have attracted considerable criticism, however, for several reasons. As there is no ‘legal obligation’ under the gaze of the state to attend, participation rates and program completion rates are quite low, and there are obviously minimal (legal) consequences for non-attendance. Dobash et al. (2000) identified that, on the other hand, court-mandated

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267 There appears to be no reference to working with mandated clients in the revised standards manual, NTV, 2006.

268 That is because they have committed a crime.

269 Hurst (1995) argued for the place of the voluntary model as it has a focus on “…prevention and early intervention (as opposed) to cure” (1995:4). This is the individual level of intervention for a sector-located structural problem. I would think though that there are other reasons to consider voluntary attendance, not the least of which is that many of men’s dominating and abusive behaviours – coercive control – do not attract criminal attention.
programs were significantly more ‘successful’ than voluntary programs or other forms of intervention. The *National Crime Prevention* (1999) report similarly advocated that the “…first and strongest level of response should be a focus on the development of integrated community based responses (that are located) within the criminal justice system” (1999:202).

NTV stated that the source of motivation for changing behaviour must originate from the perpetrators themselves (NTV, 2001:23). The peak body also proposed that a “…sole reliance on a criminal justice response to male family violence will result in non-criminal acts of violence against women and children being denied, minimised or colluded with by government and the community” (NTV, 1999:4). The perceived advantage of voluntary programs was highlighted in the following responses.

**MM3.** *How do you mandate against male privilege?*[^270]

**MF1.** *There are a whole range of behaviours that wouldn’t see the light of day because they’re not criminal but they’re very abusive and controlling. Patriarchal attitudes won’t warrant a day in court you know!*

**FM1.** *Mandated programs only serve those who come to the notice of the police and then through the courts. Aside from a whole lot of behaviour that’s not criminal we know that many women don’t report violence anyway so we’d never see a lot of blokes who come just because they’re in trouble at home.*

**FF3.** *I think that there simply needs to be greater focus on the mandated programs….and I’d be happy if it became like the States[^271]. Voluntary groups are nice and fuzzy.*

**MF7.** *I think though we sometimes have to agree that it was a mistake, a ‘one-off’ if you like, and I don’t think that that’s a hanging offence. Women don’t report a lot of this to police. And let’s face it there’s probably not too many of us doing this work who hasn’t spat it at some time!*

[^270]: If this question is representative of resignation then that is disappointing. Scandinavia has attempted to address the issue of privilege as abuse.

[^271]: Programs in the USA.
My understanding is that we don’t “...spit it”; we choose to use any abusive behaviour! There are a range of issues covered in these responses, and I concur wholeheartedly with the opinion that “(p)atriarchal attitudes won’t warrant a day in court”272. That voluntary groups are “nice and fuzzy” would perhaps imply and reinforce for this worker that the engagement with men in these groups appears to be driven by a therapeutic framework. There are also on-going issues with regards to women’s capacity / right / choice in not reporting their partners’ violence and abuse. As Pence and Shepard (1999) pointed out, feminist activists continue to “...(disagree) over the extent to which (refuge and shelter) workers could or should institute reforms that would increase the presence of the police and courts in the lives of battered women” (1999:9). Is it the ‘right’ of the victim / survivor to not press charges or to withdraw charges at a later date273, and to what extent should workers be lobbying victims / survivors when their decision is not to participate in criminal proceedings?

Physical and sexual violence are criminal offences, and it is primarily through the revelation of these offences that men come to the attention of statutory authorities and are then directed to a mandated program. Assuming that the man has ceased his criminal violence through the program – the program has been successful?, should the mandate continue in order to address the man’s wider issues of power and control in other areas? Many women attest that while physical violence may have ceased, other forms of domination and control continue frequently even increasing. Edleson (1995) enquired as to if

272 This comment simply reinforces for me that MBCPs are treating symptoms rather than causes.
273 See, for example, Lyon, J. (2002) The FAIR Project is an integrated response to domestic violence in the town of Swan Hill and Gannawarra municipalities, in North-West Victoria, that involved a partnership between Victoria Police and Mallee Domestic Violence Services (MDVS). The project arose out of in police concerns about the high number of police applications for intervention orders being struck out at court, due to the non-appearance of Aggrieved Family Members to give evidence support of the applications.
it seems inappropriate to expect or even mandate through the courts that certain men...attend a program to become transformed when others, who are not violent but who may be regularly applying unfair power and control in their own relationships, are not also required to attend programs to make similar changes in their behaviour (1995:3).

As Pease (2002) suggested, this questions the internal program logic of MBCPs, and the relationship between this intervention and collective political action. While it is worthwhile to work with a man to assist him to cease his violence and abuse towards his partner, this intervention in isolation “…has little impact on the social context in which violence occurs. (I)nterventions (need to be) aimed at changing patriarchal belief systems at a cultural level” (2002:164).

My own position is that I continue to believe that there is a place for each of these interventions. The peak body, NTV, brooks no ambiguity in stating that physical and sexual violence and abuse are crimes and must be responded to only through criminal sanctions (NTV, 2006: 32-33;118-119). Stalking, under the Crimes Act (1995) is also included in this list. NTV also takes the position that an intervention with the man will not be used in an attempt to get a lighter sentence. As the publicly-stated rhetoric places safety as the priority there must be transparency in staking this position, and in activism for its implementation through the criminal and legal sectors. In terms of transparency in this research, I believe that it is important to state again that I remain a supporter of voluntary programs – however, only within previously named contexts - not withstanding their critiques.

The position taken by the peak body, NTV, is that a sole reliance on a criminal justice response to male family violence has the potential for non-criminal acts of violence against women and children to be denied, minimised or colluded with by government and the community (NTV, 1999:4). This is an acknowledgement that
overseas programs make also. For example, the National Clearing House on Family Violence in Canada stated that “…(i)t is important to remember that, although a woman who experiences frequent psychological abuse often lives with ongoing fear of her partner, she may never have been the victim of an act that could have brought the man before the courts”274 (Trimble, 2000:3). I concur with this perspective, and it would seem that unless there is a place maintained for a community development voluntary entry model and framework, then all involved agents - facilitators, program managers, funding bodies, the community, the state etcetera - are doing partners, children, men, and society as a whole an unethical disservice. However, to my mind, while it is perhaps pertinent to consider the question of a previous respondent who replied “(h)ow do you mandate against male privilege?”275, this research ponders whether MBCPs are the best intervention to address this issue276.

Tensions within the state’s engagement

I now consider tensions that arise through the state’s engagement with the contextual location of MBCPs; an engagement that occurs under the umbrella of state-sanctioned violence and within hierarchical male organisational domination that I critiqued in the previous section. The state’s involvement in the sector demands the lens of scrutiny due to the contradictions that appear to be inherent in locating anti-violence interventions for men under this broad coverage.

274 My emphasis.
275 It is important to reflect on how to get programs into the broader social sphere outside of what is regarded as men’s family violence. There would appear to be a problem here in that if the sector speaks of challenging male privilege, then should not the arenas of intervention be casting a wider net than men’s behaviour change programs? Many men who use power and control tactics against their partners are never formally required to address these issues. See for example Edleson (1995), but perhaps more challenging Stark’s elucidation of men’s manipulative behaviours in Coercive Control (2007).
276 I think it concerning that the only places where a man might be invited to question his gender-based privilege are in a men’s behaviour change group setting, and in feminism/critical gender studies at university.
There are many questions raised in relation to the state’s involvement in overseeing anti-violence programs for men. For example, it would seem appropriate to question the practice of regulation without funding. Bennett and Piet (1999) pointed out that, in some cases, the state asks too much in terms of compliance when, in fact, it is not funding the program to this end. Hearn (1998), in sympathy with Walker’s (1990) analysis of grassroots refuge response, enquired whether the state, which reinforces and replicates patriarchy, can be trusted to oversee or in some cases take over programs that challenge this manifestation of behaviour? How can policy writers, working within gendered hierarchical structures, as Orr (1998) suggested, frame practice interventions that do not reinforce the very oppression that they claim to be challenging? Such a paradox prevails.

Watson (2001) enquired as to the consequences of promoting an orthodoxy of interventionist service delivery, suggesting that what is at stake is “…a political push for control in the arena of family violence” (2001:90). There would appear to be considerable limitations for social and structural change within the boundaries of the state that has its own agendas and processes. Masculinity, as the dominant gender discourse, is interwoven into all institutional procedures, decision making and strategies, and primary political paradigms. It could hardly be expected, as Connell (1993) suggested, that a “…democratic reform of gender relations (would be forthcoming) from an institution that is dominated by those who benefit from the present gender order” (1993: xvi). State instituted policies are gendered as opposed to being a response to gender differences. Bacchi (2004) noted that the state is actively involved in reproducing unequal gender relations by attempting to regulate gender relations within society. This begs the question that if gender relations and the corresponding inequality are so deeply embedded within the machinations of the
state, then to what extent could it be expected that these very institutions could promote non-oppressive egalitarian relationships between men and women?

As I have previously discussed, there are two main emphases of policy positioning: that of ensuring that the dominant discourse is favoured in its emphasis, and that of quelling opposition to dissenting voices (Edelman, 1988). The nation state has the capacity to be able to instigate pathways of empowerment, but also the capacity to crush differing positions and ideologies. Many immersed within the machinations of the state, while no doubt coming from an ethical and social justice position would find themselves, as Orr (1998) suggested, carried along and absorbed into the dominant discourses “…thereby silencing the very structural and social change practices that they had initially embraced” (1998:39). The following response appears to reinforce this concern.

MF7. *I think that you can get caught up in the rhetoric. It’s pretty hard to maintain a position that might be outside the box when practice is tied so much to funding and neo-liberal government influence. Dissent is not encouraged!*

Dissent is not encouraged for obvious reasons; and the dominant discourses tend to bleed into professional practice. Another way for the state to take control is by appropriating and incorporating a feminist analysis of men’s violence in the family (Francis & Tsang, 1997). Institutional relations and dominant discourses of the state constrain the dominant theoretical bases of intervention that are claimed by welfare professionals and academics. In this sense, ‘professionalising the problem’ reflects a broader political agenda that de-politicises and clinicalises violence within the family. Feminist ideologies and models of practice that originally underpinned the philosophical frameworks and practice of women’s refuge are displaced; what was a structural problem is constructed as an individualised social issue that is then open to the discourses and interventions of welfare professionals (McDonald, 2005: 278).
Under the umbrella of the professional paradigm there at times appears to be less inclination to characterise men’s violence in the family as rational and instrumental, and to regard it more as irrational, expressive and pathological (McKendy, 1997:49). As Dwyer, Smokowski, Bricout, & Wodarski, (1995) pointed out, the favoured case management approach identifies and individualises client’s needs and coordinates interventions to respond to those needs. Success – or otherwise – is thus measured in terms of the attainment of the client’s individualised clinical ambitions.

The state has at its disposal the potential to use case management to control and redirect existing models and philosophies of service delivery. The federal peak government agency, the Department of Family and Community Services (1999), stated that “…fundamentally case management…changed…agencies from being insular and largely unaccountable,…(it) has started to have a profound effect on…services and systems,…and has begun to push the boundaries of conventional notions of service provision” (1999:86). The methodology and impact of case management contributes to the individualisation of family violence at the expense of the broader structural analysis. Professionally rationalising the welfare response subordinates other manifestations of knowledge and power (Clarke, Gewirtz and McLaughlin, 2000). Under the state gaze – linked unambiguously to funding – service delivery has become more “…contractual, competitive and calculative” (Clarke et al., 2000:9), and a considerable component of this is adherence to the dominant state-sanctioned discourse. Within this framework, political and social activism exists interwoven in a tension with agency funding demands, organisational constraints and dominant discourse approaches to programs. With the establishment of mandated men’s behaviour change pilot programs, and separate family violence courts in Victoria, MBCPs have become increasingly dependent on referrals and
funding from the criminal justice sector. This has necessitated a greater focus on the case-managed change of individual men’s behaviour as opposed to challenging the broader violences of gender and related structural oppression. Thus, pressure on programs, as Greig (2001) noted, “…to be providers of social services, and not catalysts for social change, is also a function of the very structures of oppression within which they operate” (2001:13).

This would appear to leave little room for feminist analyses based on patriarchal dominance and male privilege. For example, the meta-evaluation of the previous federal governments initiative, Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (2003), discounted the contribution and value of “…early feminist” (p.8) theories of family violence, and instead advanced a “…holistic, integrated approach” (p.9). There was little ambiguity in this report’s recommendations that agencies funded by the state should accept the “…emerging agreement between policy advisors and practitioners...(otherwise)...it is possible for funded agencies to run programs (that are) counter to departmental and / or government policy or to fail to fully meet their own purpose and objectives” (2003:9).

Thus, it appears that the clear social change agendas of feminist organisations are suppressed under the now competitive market of welfare service delivery. Egan and Hoatson (1999) suggested that this economic rationalism – which individualises social issues - is incongruent with feminist ideologies that highlight structural analyses.

Central to feminist philosophy has been the commitment to link the personal to the political with services using their knowledge from their own service provision to build social action and community education programs to fight for structural change. Reliant on government funding, feminist services have to conform (to) government agendas which stem from an ideology which
individualises problems. (Consequently) greater priority is being given to counselling methods where community problems are individualised and can be more easily evaluated in terms of output measures (1999:408).

Hardiman (1998) suggested that there has been a clear policy trend to depoliticise gendered theories of violence to a more welfare-founded clinical foci of individual pathology. Structurally framed explanations of family violence and feminist-founded models of service provision have been, as McDonald (2005) proposed, “…forced out in favour of a welfare orientation that focuses on meeting the individual needs of victims. Domestic violence has been reconstructed as a welfare problem rather than a structural gender issue” (2005:282). This reconstruction is part of a broader political struggle that Melville (1998) suggested has effectively silenced structural analyses of family violence and displaced service delivery that was based on feminist models. It is worth mentioning again the issue of class in this debate, as welfare / social work interventions were able to encompass variables of class inequality by labelling them as ‘poverty’. However, in the context of the conceptual struggle with grass roots feminist activists, the influence of the variable ‘class’ appears to have been effectively pushed aside (McKendy, 1997:149)277.

277 It is important here to reflect on developments that have occurred during the gestation of this research. As previously mentioned, at a federal level the incumbent PADV was replaced with Time for Action: The National Council’s plan for Australia to reduce violence against women and their children 2009-2021. While this plan appears to have been well received, it is problematic that a commitment of $55.2 million over the following four years is in fact $20 million less than the previous conservative governments’ Women’s Safety Agenda 2005-2009. As Costello (2009) suggested, this appears concerning next to the Government’s estimate that family violence affects 350,000 women annually, with an annual cost to the nation estimated at $13.6 million.

At the state level that is more relevant to this research, the government’s position was set out in Changing Lives: A new approach to family violence in Victoria (2005) and a later framework, Preventing violence before it occurs (VHPF, 2007). It then developed the State Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2010-2020, the first whole-of-government plan to prevent violence; which had as its aim to actively promote gender equity, non-violent communities and organisations, and respectful and non-discriminatory relationships. Additionally, the Family Violence Legislation Implementation Committee monitors training around new laws by court registrars, police, duty workers, magistrates and support workers. The Safer Families Training (Victorian Government, 2006) aims to up-skill registrars, maternal and child health workers, and support workers in an accessible and common family violence risk assessment and risk management framework to assist towards developing an integrated service response (Costello, 2009).
Acknowledging tensions within the state’s intervention with family violence is not to disparage or to underestimate the authenticity of mandated programs for men or of integrated interventions set within the criminal justice system. There is no intent here to deny the benefits of an increased diversity of interventions (Women’s Services Network, 2000) or services to individual women and children escaping violence in the home. However, welfare professionals and others need to be aware of their location under the umbrella of the state’s influence, and how economic rationalist outcomes of de-funding, amalgamation, mainstreaming, and the influence of state-sanctioned dominant discourses impacts upon their professional delivery (Weeks, 1998).

Marking scents: coordination and collaboration

Most Victorian agencies under the umbrella of the peak body NTV, as previously mentioned, commenced running programs using a variation of a framework known as the Duluth Model. This program, the Domestic Abuse and Intervention Project, highlighted the necessity for the police, the criminal justice system, women’s support agencies, and providers of men’s stopping violence groups to provide a coordinated and consistent response to men’s violence in the family. In 1996 the Victorian Community Council Against Violence proposed the endorsement of the need to develop integrated and coordinated approaches across Government and non-government agencies so as to deal more effectively with violence against women. It suggested that pathways and frameworks for coordination should be developed at a state-wide, regional and local level, and that processes for ensuring ongoing monitoring, accountability and evaluation be developed. Keys Young (1999) reinforced and focused this endorsement, suggesting that primary attention be given to “…the development of integrated community-based responses based within the
criminal justice system”278 (1999:202). The thinking behind this emphasis was that for men’s stopping violence groups to be a ‘successful’ intervention in directing men to change their violent and abusive behaviours, they could not operate in isolation of other support services – particularly the criminal justice system (Gondolf, 2002; Laing, 2002).

A significant federal report initiated more than a decade ago through National Crime Prevention (1999), “Ending Domestic Violence: Programs For Perpetrators”, reviewed literature concerning programs for men who use violence towards family members, and looked critically at programs throughout Australia. The emphasis of this report was on providing a strong criminal justice response to men who use violence against family members. However, although the report advocated a primarily mandated response, this position did not appear to be supported in its findings. Consultations that were conducted through the Office of Women’s Policy with a range of service providers showed that a lack of focus on, and a lack of recognition of, voluntary programs within Victoria was met with strong criticism.

These two sets of findings appear to be contradictory. While it is acknowledged that the vast majority of women who experience family violence do not access police intervention, the researchers advocate primarily for a criminal justice response to men who use violence in the family. This position appears to be somewhat problematic in that it significantly ignores the vast numbers of family violence incidents that do not initiate a course of legal action. A major report released through Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (1998), “Against The Odds: How

278 My emphasis.
Women Survive Domestic Violence” highlighted that a significant number of women never seek criminal justice redress in their experiences of family violence²⁷⁹.

According to Cohen (in Healy et al., 1998) “…once (it is) realized that coordinated community response is the level at which men’s violence can be changed or stopped, it’s easier to let go of one’s investment in individual men changing [(which is) the aim of most batterer programs]” (1998:94). Tolman and Edelson (1995) argued that it may be the case that the greatest contribution men’s stopping violence programs make may not be their work with individual offenders, but rather their ability to bring together major agents in the criminal justice and community service sectors to work cooperatively to reduce men’s violence in the family. Cooperative efforts among criminal justice agencies, providers of men’s programs, victim advocates, women’s agencies, and the community are likely to produce more significant reductions in family violence than any single unit or program. Tolman and Edelson (1995) suggested that much of what is important in changing social attitudes toward men’s violence in the family lies in the coordinated and consistent messages that criminal justice agencies send through their interactions with women and men and in criminal justice agencies’ cooperative work with community groups, schools, and violence interventions²⁸⁰. Thus, changing the behaviour of individual men is only part of the larger policy objective of deterring everyone from being violent and abusive to their partners.

²⁷⁹ Various reasons cited within the report suggested that women were concerned that they would not be taken seriously, that there was limited confidence in a police response and, perhaps more concerning, that contacting the police may make matters worse. See, for example, Hatty (1988), Holder, (1999) or Keys Young (2000).

²⁸⁰ A coordinated collaborative approach has become what would also be regarded as another of the axioms upon which these interventions are based.
Difficulties with, and questions raised around, coordinated collaborative responses to men’s family violence suggest that there is a requirement to discern how the state and associated agencies viewed this position. As Pease (2004:62) suggested, “…(t)he question is whether it is possible for organisations at these different levels to work cooperatively to promote egalitarian relationships”. Activists have raised the issue of potential cooption (Walker, 1990; Francis & Tsang, 1997), and police and criminal justice responses are frequently in tension with the feminist analyses that are adopted by refuge activists who support women through the process of recovery and moving on. Shepard and Pence (1999) highlighted this incongruence in questioning to what extent women’s activists could or should institute reforms that would lead to an increase in the presence of the police and the courts in the lives of women who have experienced men’s violence? Isolated policing practices have advocated a pro-arrest policy281. Activists question to what extent they can follow through and advocate for full criminal intervention when partners / survivors are not wishing to and, in fact, they might be more concerned about criminal charges being dropped for many and varied reasons282.

The focus in this research is on programs for men accessing voluntary MBCPs within Victoria283. They have not been referred by the courts or the police, and the programs that they are accessing are primarily located within the health and community sector as opposed to the criminal justice system. There are tensions between the advantages and limitations of voluntary versus mandated programs with one national survey in particular finding that many facilitators and coordinators of voluntary MBCPs in Australia are either ambivalent or hostile to criminal justice sanctioned programs (NCP, 1999:66). As previously mentioned, voluntary

281 See, for example, Lyons (2002).
282 Child protection workers report similarly.
283 Consider this ‘socially mandated’ as I have previously discussed.
programs have received their share of critique with numerous research studies noting that the participation and attendance rates are not consistent and that drop-out is high (Mederos, 1999; NCP, 1999; Gondolf, 2002). Further, due to the voluntary nature of attendance at these groups, there are obviously no (legal) consequences if men cease their attendance at a program and, additionally, there is also no on-going supervision of a man’s behaviour. The absence of legal sanctions determines that there is no inducement on men to steer a path towards non-violence. Within the broader social setting, as Dobash et al. (2000) suggested, this means that “...while some men do volunteer to join programs in search of personal change, the overwhelming majority do not” (2000:45).

NTV (1999) has argued strongly in favour of voluntary programs, suggesting that the motivation for change must come from the man himself, as part of taking responsibility for violence and abuse means that, as previously stated, “...(m)en must choose to embrace change; any attempt to force them to change is a misuse of power and control” (2001:16). “Sole reliance on a criminal justice response to male family violence will result in non-criminal acts of violence against women and children being denied, minimized or colluded with by government and the community” (1999:4). Added to this is also the consideration that to have been mandated to attend a program a man must have demonstrated physical or sexual violence as forms of illegal violence. This raises the issue of men’s continued mandation to a program if / when their illegal violence ceases. As previously mentioned, Edleson (1995) questioned whether it is appropriate to continue to mandate men to take responsibility for their continued use of non-criminal power and control behaviours when other men, who may not be criminally violent and

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284 Partner contact provides the only access to feedback and external scrutiny of the man’s behaviour. Not all partners are contactable nor are all willing to be contacted.

285 Again, stalking also comes under this category.
abusive but who are using coercive control and domination in their own relationships, are not also required to attend programs to make similar changes in their behaviour (1995:3).

Working with individual men to assist them to cease their violent and abusive behaviour towards their partners is noble and well-intentioned\textsuperscript{286}, but clearly has minimal impact on the social and cultural context in which these behaviours are replicated and reinforced. I now consider the intersection of voluntary MBCPs and change at the broader social and cultural level.

**Voluntary MBCPs and social change**

A greater awareness of the need to look more critically and with greater acknowledgement at the fundamental social and cultural foundations that contribute to violence was highlighted in the *Violence against Women Community Attitudes Project* (VicHealth, 2006). This report noted that “…increased emphasis (needs to) be given to addressing the underlying social norms that contribute to violence given the link between attitudes to gender roles and gender relations and attitudes towards violence against women” (2006:9). In critiquing the location of interventions for men who use violence and abuse in the family, Dobash and Dobash (1992) suggested that there needs to be a much greater focus on challenging the institutionalisation of violence and to work towards wider social change. Klein, Campbell, Soler and Ghez (1997) argued that “…domestic violence continues to flourish…because of the ways that society implicitly accepts and condones disrespect of and violence against women” (1997:88). In order to address the causes

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\textsuperscript{286} I draw a parallel with a mythopoetic men’s organisation, Mankind Project, which has as its stated ambition “Changing the World, one man at a time”. While I am sometimes in somewhat broad-based general sympathy with some of their sentiments, I struggle with both their focus and, in particular, their timelines. See mankindproject.org
rather than the symptoms they suggested that what is needed are “…public education initiatives to encourage individuals and communities to claim personal responsibility for stopping domestic violence” (1997:91). Tolman and Edelson (1995) proposed that in instituting and relying on tertiary intervention “…it is unlikely that psycho-educational groups aimed at a targeted subgroup of men will be the primary means of bringing about the desired social change in… men’s behaviour towards women” (1995:286).

The focus on the behaviour of individual men at the expense of addressing broader structural gender inequalities is a charge that is constantly levelled at men’s stopping violence interventions. Consider for example, the following response from an experienced program manager and a facilitator:

Q. In what ways do these programs address change at the broader structural issues of patriarchy and privilege?

   MM2. They don’t.

   MF7. Probably very little….if at all. It’s a very difficult discussion.

There is no ambiguity in these blunt responses from these coalface workers. What appears to make this “…a very difficult discussion” is that it is clear that the work which is being done with individual men in the group is at the individual level of personal change; effectively treating symptoms and not causes. Laing (2002) made the point that it was feminist women working through the refuge movement in responding to the needs of individual women and their children for support and safety who “…linked this work with the individual women to the need for change at the broader societal (and structural) level”. Therefore “…(i)t might well be asked of any MBCP that works with individual men to take responsibility for their violence how well (if at all) this program articulates the connections of this work at the individual level with efforts at the institutional and social levels” (Laing, 2002:23).
Consider the same question as above asked of another experienced program manager.

Q. In what ways do these programs address change at the broader structural issues of patriarchy and privilege?

MM6. In a very slow burning way. We’re mainly about safety. We’re working with the results of the system. We’re not disconnected from that…we feed into that. But we’re not really about making structural changes. That’s not the purpose of the group or what it does. That’s for NTV to worry about.

Again, there is little ambiguity in this response. The claimed focus is ‘...mainly about’ safety and working with individual men to address their contribution to, and responsibility for, that. There appears to be an assumption that structural change will necessarily follow as a result of working with men in isolation from the system: with the interaction of the peak body. Dobash et al. (2000) suggested that

(e)ven the more modest agenda of turning down the volume of violence for increasing numbers of men and turning up the volume of safety for increasing numbers of women is not only a small undertaking it is a necessary and inevitable part of the pathway to the elimination of all violence against women (2000:40).

I generally concur with this view. However, while adopting this position, it is clear that work with individual men who use violence and abuse in the family must address, at its fundamental genesis, the social and cultural context of gendered inequality. Blagg (2001) proposed that it is paradoxical that, given the credence of feminist analyses of men’s violence in the family, the majority of interventions with these men have been individualised. Again, the same question as above elicited this response.

FM1. Minimally! That’s the dilemma. (We are) working with men in a powerful system.

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287 My emphasis.
The tension involved in this work regarding working with individual men concerning a structurally located issue is highlighted here in this workers response. More than two decades ago, Eisikovits and Edleson (1989) hypothesised that “…it may be easier and less threatening to society to target individuals and families for change rather than the norms and values that are part of an intricate web of social order” (1989:407). This is somewhat problematic, and if it is accepted as this thesis argues, that men’s violence and abuse in the family stems from a belief system whereby men are convinced of their right and authority to dominate and control, then that belief system - that is grounded in the socio / cultural frameworks of society, has to be confronted. While there may be debate about the place of ‘up-skilling’ men in communication / behavioural techniques, there is a growing consensus that behavioural interventions alone – outside of a systemic feminist / socio-political perspective on men’s violence to their partners - are morally incomplete and an inadequate and even potentially dangerous response (Orme, Dominelli and Mullender, 2000).

This does not suggest though that there is not a valid place for accountable and transparent interventions with individual men. However, Pease (2004) raised the concern that governments, Courts and the human services will see men’s programs as the main intervention into men’s violence and broader cultural and structural change will be neglected as a result. The potential (and limitation) of these programs to contribute to social change is related to both their internal program logic and the wider intervention context in which they are located (2004:65).

This relationship requires greater analysis, as there is considerable potential to disassociate from and neglect the importance of gender as a social construction in establishing, replicating, reinforcing and maintaining structural oppression. While there appears to be a valid place for MBCPs as one branch in the larger stopping
violence interventionist tree, Warters (1992) maintained that what is in need of
greater emphasis is the impact and influence of a “…patriarchal and male dominated
society (and the validity of) important structural changes in addition to the cessation
of violence by individual men” (1992:15).

Another issue of concern is with the ambivalence of the messages that are sent to
men. A very clear position needs to be taken in regards to “…batterer intervention
systems” (Gondolf, 2002:2) rather than programs for individual men. Criminal
sanctions need to be enforceable and swift; failure to do so reinforces the contrary
attitudes taken by both the system and society. Men presenting due to an ultimatum
from their partner’s concerning their use of male privilege, for example, are not
likely to be subjected to the external lens of scrutiny. Stark (2007) proposed that
MBCPs have become accepted with such conviction as they offer the opportunity
“...to satisfy the demand for offender accountability without overresponding to the
minor nature” of the majority of men’s controlling behaviours (2007:67): that is,
they are seen as user-friendly, accessible, “warm and fuzzy”. Robertson (1999)
pointed out that through the group program men are constantly challenged with the
mantra that their violence and abuse is their choice and that it is their responsibility
to change; but that they are also hearing that “…the world doesn’t care which choice
you make” (1999:19). Likewise, Palmer, Brown and Barrera (1992) questioned the
mixed messages that followed the impunity with which men can opt out of
programs. They suggested that “…(t)he lack of pursuit of those subjects who failed
to attend the required number of group sessions...raises questions about the legal
system’s failure in responsibility to society in general and to the abused partners of
these men in particular” (1992:282).
There would appear to be limitations on the potential of men’s stopping violence programs in isolation to impact on the broader stage of social change. Change in individual men’s violence and abuse in the family is directly related to wider socio/cultural change towards violence. While many MBCPs invite men to weigh up the dilemmas and difficulties of attempting to live up to the dominant discourses of masculinities, these appear not to engage with how men might challenge the external violences of social relations whose oppression is broader. The following responses consider the issue of inviting men to consider where they might locate the genesis of their behaviours.

Q. Through engaging with this program where would men come to locate the causes of their violence and abuse?

MM5. Well... for example, we look at ways in which the men view gender roles. We write up a couple of columns and write down 'masculine beliefs' and 'feminine beliefs' and then look at how the ways in which we try to uphold those traits and, particularly, how in the end it doesn't work for us.

FF3. It’s useful for men to look at how they’ve tried to live up to the expectation of male roles... acting out gender... dominant ideas about what it means to be a man and how this hasn’t worked for most of us. In fact poor role models helped get most of the men to the group! So they’re looking at the consequences of their behaviour in trying to live up to traditional models of masculinity.

These comments suggest a useful framework for working with individual men, but questions arise as to how this paradigm can address the inherent violence of gender and how it constructs, reinforces and maintains social relations that are oppressive. It also ignores how men benefit from these very systems; and this is a point which I believe gets missed in many programs as there appears more frequently a focus on how these frameworks do not work.

288 See, for example, Connell, 1995.
Identity politics (Epstein, 1987) creates binaries such as gender roles and also has a considerable impact on other social roles that are maintained through violence. Greig (2001) suggested that work with men who use violence and abuse in the family should not be confined within a gender paradigm that seeks to redefine a new masculine identity for men because this only reinforces the violence that is inherent within privileging the identity of gender. (While men)...need new kinds of attitudes and behaviours if their violence is to be reduced…it is not useful to define these as comprising a new kind of masculinity because that would be to define them in relation to not being feminine and (it would) reaffirm the necessity (and violence) of that negation (2001:10).

It appears then that the challenge for workers with violent men is “…to connect the violence of gender with the violence between individual men and women” (Greig, 2001:10). It is also notable that this framework of asking individual men to reflect on how attempting to live up to the expectations of masculine roles does not invite them to consider the benefits that are gained and accrued from continuing to ascribe to these roles.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered how MBCPs are enmeshed with the agenda and frameworks of the state, and how the psychological and behavioural emphases of the dominant discourse have had a tendency to de-politicise discussion of these connections. Along this route has been the neglecting of the political questions of what it means for men to take responsibility for ethical and just relationships. In considering the interplay and impact of poststructuralism on the state’s policy agendas for family violence intervention I elaborated on how various involved agents are positioned in relation to other contributing agents and institutions. Policy making processes recognise the existence of multiple realities, and also recognise the dynamic of resistance that exists within institutional power relationships.
I critically considered how the state both constructs and ‘sells’ subjectivities to the masses. The state must construct its subjectivities within a sympathetic environment, or one in which it has the control. The institutional format of discourse practice and formulation is important as they have internal logics that can be reduced neither to abstract structures nor to pockets of events and occurrences. A critique of the gendered behaviour that is men’s violence and abuse in the family needs to acknowledge that the state and its off-shoot affiliations are themselves gendered as men dominate the vast numbers of hierarchical positions and appointments within society. As I suggested, it is difficult not to enquire how agents of the state can forge protocols that do not reinforce or perpetuate oppression.

This chapter considered various concerns around programs engaging with the criminal justice system and that interventions with men will be used to avoid criminal sanctions. Key stakeholders have expressed concerns that MBCPs, now firmly ensconced as a legitimate part of government and community intervention, will usurp the criminal justice system as the primary intervention and referral for men using violence within the family. Activists amongst the women’s sector have questioned the extent to which the intervention of a MBCP highlights rather than minimises the criminality of the violent and abusive behaviour. Others have reflected on whether the responsibility for punishing men who use violence and abuse in the family rests not with the man’s partner, but with the state.

I raised the concerns and dangers inherent in any program operating in isolation. While considering the need for transparency and accountability for safety reasons there are fears that criminal behaviour will not be responded to as such by the legal system, and that programs will be used as a ‘soft sentencing’ option. I also
considered on how wider non-criminal behaviours of men can be addressed within the criminal justice system. This chapter concluded by reflecting on the contribution or otherwise that MBCPs make to and gain from involvement with the broader canvas of social and structural change.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Introduction
This final chapter draws together the varying threads of this research to reflect on the foundations of MBCP intervention as a response to the behaviour of men who perpetrate violence and abuse within the family. Initially I provide a brief chapter summary of this research, before re-visiting the research questions that guided the research. I then provide space to reflect upon the various issues, incongruences, difficulties and tensions that have surfaced through its gestation. This includes considering the place of MBCPs within social change. This thesis concludes by considering some of the limitations of CDA for this research.

Thesis summary
Chapter one commenced laying the foundations of the need to address men’s violence against women in the family. I reflected upon men’s violence in the family, factors inherent in critically studying men, masculinities and violence, as well as considering the genesis and foundational rationale of men’s behaviour change programs.
Chapter two considered dominant discourses and definitions of men's violent and abusive behaviours. Definitions of violence are contested and this contestation is itself a part of the process of the reproduction of, and indeed opposition to, violence. This chapter discussed and distinguished between differing theoretical explanations of men’s violent and abusive behaviours: a biological-based model, a psychological model, behavioural management explanations, interactional explanations based upon a family systems approach to communication and dialogue, and a feminist analysis that critiques patriarchy, male privilege and structural gender inequality.

Chapter three outlined the methodology that underpinned this research. The logic of the research design and methods of data collection and analysis were outlined initially, along with issues of validity and reliability that acknowledge that there are potentially competing paradigms and differences in coming to a position of how to analyse data with any claim to ‘validity’. I also reflected on my own enmeshment as the involved subjective researcher, considering challenges that I faced in conceptualising my own ‘truths’ and power over the research process when interpreting data. The third section of this chapter reflected on ethical issues that frame myself as the researcher within the dynamic of the process and stated outcomes. Here I considered not only my own position of being male and critiquing political action against men’s behaviour, but also how I stand to benefit from the very programs that I claim to be critiquing.

Chapter four focused the research lens upon the theoretical framework - a poststructuralist feminist analysis - that informs this thesis. Considered here initially are the issues of men critiquing men and the standpoint that this provides for doing feminist-influenced research. I considered in this chapter the validity of directing a
poststructuralist lens to illuminate the various ways in which agents attempt to claim their expression of authenticity within the sector. I distinguished between the terms poststructuralism and postmodernism, and concluded by considering the interplay between poststructuralism and feminism, naming some of the complementarities as well as the inherent tensions that exist between them.

Chapter five outlined the considerations inherent within a critical discourse analysis, reflecting how discourse is able to shed light on how the political hegemony, jurisdiction, and authenticity of dominant groups is established, justified and defended, and how various factors come to influence, and to be influenced by, the practice of discourse. I reflected on the relationship that exists between discourse and hegemony; and how as hegemony is a principle paradigm within which authoritative legitimation is claimed, it has a vested interest in undertakings by actors to attribute intention and purpose. This chapter considered how this comes to manifest through struggle and the ideological positioning and constructing of agents’ political agendas.

Chapter six examined the axioms of programs through the theoretical lenses previously described. The claim of working under the philosophical framework of a feminist analysis of men’s violence was examined as were criticisms of feminist analyses as applied to men’s behaviour change programs. This chapter also questioned the focus on the individual man’s violence towards individual women at the expense of the socio-political structural foundations in which this behaviour germinates, while also examining the need for men to accept responsibility for change, and the influence and impact of acting out sex roles and choice. I also considered the question as to whether a ‘one-size-fits-all’ program is a sufficient
foundation upon which to engage with the diversities of men who present for intervention, and concluded by reflecting upon the vexed issue of accountability and how that is dealt with or not given the espoused focus on transparency.

Chapter seven analysed the various foundations of MBCPs through interpreting nomenclature that agents claim to establish jurisdiction over their expression of authenticity within the sector. This chapter reflected on the naming process within a behaviour-as-choice epistemology. The means and manner of representation by which programs sell their message and focus out in the community was critiqued in light of the varying language and publicly distributed brochures that programs use to advertise where they believe lay the appropriate foci for their intervention. This chapter considered how workers understand and address the issues of class and, to a limited extent, culture in their interventions with men who use violence and abuse in the family. Also reflected on were the claims of the effectiveness of this intervention in light of the political context in which it resides and, particularly, the vested interests that proponents have in claiming effectiveness as well as defining outcomes of success.

Chapter eight analysed interaction with external agencies, considering factors that intertwine poststructuralism and state policy, particularly in light of constructing and selling subjectivities within the state. It was also pertinent to reflect on the role of mandated programs in the context of the state, but also in the context of the work being done by the peak body NTV and its particular relationship with volunteer programs. This chapter concluded by considering the relationship between the internal program logic of MBCPs and the bigger picture of social and cultural change.
Revisiting and reflecting

It is pertinent to re-visit the original research questions that underpin this thesis.

1. How are axioms of practice – the taken-for-granted foundations and frameworks for intervention in men’s behaviour change groups - produced and interpreted, appropriated and / or resisted by different actors and agencies in the sector?

2. How do agents establish jurisdiction over their expression of authenticity within the sector, and reflect on engagement with the peak body, NTV?

3. How are external structural frameworks and influences located and woven into the interventions with voluntarily referred individual men?

It is important to go back to the genesis of this work to question the foundation upon which all other engagements are based. Working with men who use / perpetrate violence and abuse in their intimate relationships / the family is at its most basic level about the safety of women and children. While it is perhaps regarded by some of my colleagues as a pedantic exercise, my position is that the sole purpose of this work is safety\textsuperscript{289}. Any other purpose of engagement or consequential outcomes – men’s greater involvement in their children’s lives, greater communication skills for men, for example, while laudable, comes a distant second\textsuperscript{290}.

My initial point of reflection within this research concerned the language of what it is that is being addressed. The sector takes pains to consistently articulate the dominant discourse of men’s violence in the family as being located in behaviours that have been learned and, as they are learned they can be unlearned. I referred to examples of other cultures where violent and abusive behaviours are not tolerated; there are social sanctions against it. However, it is concerning that the sector

\textsuperscript{289} Women, children, men, and the broader society.
\textsuperscript{290} Again, these benefits are very important! As previously mentioned, it is usually only through a men’s behaviour change group or maybe ‘gender studies’ at tertiary level that men would come to question, query and challenge the status quo of gender relations and their own attitudes towards women.
continues to use the adjective ‘male’ rather than the noun ‘men’ to refer to the location of the behaviour. As I discussed in chapter four, this immediately correlates sex and behaviour as, in using the adjective, there thus resides a location of biologically pre-determined behaviour; an inevitability to violence due to sex. If the adjective is removed and replaced with the noun, then the genesis must be sourced elsewhere - the learned behaviours of men, as they are the doers of the behaviour and, as such then it is men’s responsibility to stop.

Replacing the adjective with the noun relocates and reinforces that men’s violence originates from men and, in particular, is taught by men to other men and boys. The scripts of masculinity originate in the social and cultural contexts in which men live out their interpretations of what it means to be male. The idiosyncratic language that pertains to a particular politic / discipline or sector is an expression of the power that participants need to take on board in order to state their competency over others. Integration into a single linguistic community (in this case the *male family violence* community) is a product of the political domination that is endlessly reproduced by institutions\(^291\), and is the condition for the establishment of relations of (linguistic) domination. However, in attempting to stake a claim of authenticity in locating the genesis of this behaviour by promoting the use of the adjective ‘male’ the sector defeats its own argument. Thus, it is missing the point, and indeed quite incongruent to the philosophical axioms upon which the work is claimed to sit, to continue to refer to ‘*male* family violence’\(^292\).

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\(^{291}\) See, for example, Bourdieu, 1991.

\(^{292}\) I raised this point in sector training approximately 4 years ago. Colleagues were quite interested and surprised at the obviousness of such an apparent oversight; and nodded sagely. And still it remains.
It is important to reflect upon the grouping of all men’s dominating and controlling behaviours under the umbrella of ‘violence’. I appreciate that feminist activists and others have tried to highlight and name the broadness of dominating and controlling behaviours by expanding the definition to include other behaviours such as financial control or social isolation. The means by which this discourse of ‘violence’ is named - the “ideational functions” of language (Fairclough, 1992:64) - plays a considerable role in the process of accepting and reproducing the dominant discourse. By applying the one label of ‘violence’ there was an ambition to ensure that other forms of oppression were not dismissed. I know that many of my colleagues, as revealed through this research, would argue strongly that to not regard these behaviours as violent minimises their controlling nature and is, in fact, another form of denial.

However, as I have previously stated, I do not regard behaviours such as male privilege or social isolation, for example, as violent, and I believe that there is a danger in categorising all oppressive behaviours as violence as this structures the notion of violence as a residual supposition which then has its impact weakened and diluted. Dominating and controlling behaviours need to be named and dealt with in the same way that other more oppressive – and illegal – behaviours are challenged. However, when the word ‘violence’ is portrayed as the only acceptable term to describe injustices within the domestic sphere, then it would seem that the term is in danger of being rendered meaningless. If everything is violence then nothing is, and in the process the pervasive nature of domestic inequality is unchallenged. I have worked professionally with many women who have strongly disagreed with my interpretation and description of their experiences as violence, yet they struggle to
name the varying degrees of inequality that prevails in their relationships. However, if the only options available are violence or nothing then, as the problem cannot be named succinctly, their experiences are not validated, and their partners are freed from accountability and responsibility for the dominating and controlling behaviours that they use. Thus, it would seem pertinent to broaden the scope of description to more accurately articulate the multiple realities of women’s experiences.

This is a very important point. As I mentioned in the preamble to this research the singular focus on ‘violence’ glosses over and even masks a much more devastating reality for women. That is, that the vast majority of abusive relationships endured by women clearly involve men using a largely unidentified form of subjugation that more closely resembles an interpretation of indentured domestic servitude than physical assault. This is not a symmetrical dynamic of power; and while Johnson (2000) sends an invitation to articulate the tactical combinations of coercion and control that are used in relationships, there is a need to reformulate a theory of damage accordingly, and to then yoke the dynamic and outcomes in these situations to social factors. If this challenge is addressed this would, as Stark (2006:19) suggested “…awaken (the sector) from the stupor in which it has languished since it adapted the reductionist equation of abuse with violence”.

While working with a couple in marriage counselling I invited the woman to consider that her husband’s opinions and wishes appeared to be privileged in the relationship: that is, he had the final word on all matters that involved the family and the home. That was not an issue that this woman wanted to discuss: her position was that there had to be one final adjudicator of any disagreement and, as far as she (and he) was concerned, that adjudicator was sanctioned by both biology and ‘God’. The orthodoxy of the sector did not stand a chance.

See, for example, Stark, 2007.
This is important in working with men in behaviour change programs\textsuperscript{295}. There would be little argument that a man needs to hear that his criminal acts of violence are just that – criminal behaviour - and that he needs to take responsibility and be accountable for his behaviour: and \textit{that society will hold him accountable to that}. However, a man using male privilege, domestic neglect or more subtle forms of coercive control would not countenance himself as a violent man or these behaviours as violent: and I would add that I am of the opinion that the majority of society would agree\textsuperscript{296}. I ponder also that if, by taking a one-size-fits-all approach, the sector is not in some potential danger from retaliatory flack and backlash from activists on the right of men’s politics who might regard the broad-brush inclusive discourse as demonstrating that women are just as violent as men. Comments such as “Well, that’s how she speaks to me – so that’s violence”, and “That’s how she treats me – that’s violence” appear to be very open for exploitation from those advocating a gender-symmetrical position on violence in the family. Thus, to my mind the sector does itself - and women - a disservice to continue to group all forms of men’s insidious behaviours under the one umbrella of ‘violence’.

While sector colleagues have noticed an increase in the education level and income of group participants over the last decade, it is simply the case that the majority of men presenting to a MBCP are working class: thus, it would seem significant that the issue of social class requires more consideration than it appears to receive. Analyses that subsume problems of patriarchy and male privilege under the critique of exploitative class relations have been rejected by many feminist scholars. I have argued in this research that raising the vexed question of social class potentially

\textsuperscript{295} And elsewhere.
\textsuperscript{296} I think that it is also fairly obvious that a man using these manifestations of behaviour would not be likely to find himself mandated into a MBCP! This, to my mind, reinforces the consideration for voluntary programs.
implies the status of victimhood to men also; that is, that it is being used as an excuse for their violent and abusive behaviour. However, while the dominant discourse within the sector is that class does not cause violence, it is problematic not to consider the constantly correlated influence that class and other variables such as ethnicity and culture have on men’s choices of behaviour. If this work is founded upon a feminist analysis, then it is perhaps useful to re-hone Laing’s (2002) lens of critique in articulating that “…feminist...activism has...grappled with the interaction of gender, race, class and ethnicity in order to more fully understand all the dimensions of the socio-political context\textsuperscript{297} in which violence against women occurs” (2002:2). Considerable feminist history is ignored if it is not remembered that there was always an acknowledged awareness of differences between women with regards to their standings in ethnicity, class, race and sexuality. To acknowledge these influences does not suggest excusing or justifying men’s behaviours, or to reduce behaviours to basic cause and effect. It does, however, as Edwards and Hearn (2004:51) articulated, “…point to the interlinking of men’s violence with economic and material circumstances (: correlations that) need to be addressed in policies and strategies against men’s violence”.

Similarly, the violences of men are not monolithic phenomena as there are often competing variables that shape the paradigms of this behaviour. While all men who choose to use violence are in the position of exerting some form of patriarchal oppression, the relationships that men have to patriarchy tend to differ in varying ways depending on their enmeshment with their social and cultural location. As I previously mentioned, the paradigms that frame discourse are regarded as part of the taken-for-granted, and as such are not questioned as the political location does not

\textsuperscript{297} My emphasis.
allow for variance. Those interviewed did not give much attention to the issue of the social class of the men presenting at their programs; and it would seem that the orthodoxy of the dominant discourse appears not to allow for this discussion. Perhaps there is an element of fear in this non-acknowledgment of social class: fear of not being able to stand up under sector scrutiny in order to process and think through the reasons behind this? That forms of patriarchy and men’s violence are universal, and yet sections of society are able to position themselves between the cracks of scrutiny through more subtle / less overt means of coercion, leads me to wonder if this silence is also a product of that coercive behaviour: that is, ‘we’re perfect’, ‘we don’t hit women’, ‘count us out of that statistic of violent wife-beating rabble’? However, if a variable of class continues to present - and to present as a strong correlation - then it would seem folly not to consider both its genesis and the impact that it brings to bear on other paradigms. If the two-fold ambitions of critical discourse analysis are to systematically examine (i) discourse as an instrument of power, and (ii) discourse as a tool of the social construction of authenticity and reality (Sotillo and Starace-Nastasi, 1991), then this allows for a more sharply defined focus on the social and political capacities that critical discourse analysis provides, as it elucidates the tensions not only between political antagonists but, in particular, between social classes.

As previously discussed, the beliefs that men hold, and their corresponding actions and behaviours, are tied to socio / culturally sanctioned prescriptions of masculinities. Men are frequently very resistant to a program philosophy of accepting individual responsibility as this is usually in tension with the frameworks through which they experienced a masculinity that was located within their socio / cultural value system. When men attempt to account for and to engage with
accepting responsibility for their behaviour, they are often giving both an explanation for the violence as well as constructing a framework and rationale for the behaviour – frequently one outside their capacity to influence. Men are required to remove from their personal narratives references to social relational contexts of their lives that might provide the grounds for excusing, justifying, denying or minimalising their behaviours. It implies that the located axiom-of-agent upon which the premise of total ownership of all behaviours sit is, as McKendy (1997:146) noted, that of a “…self-possessed, rational, and emotionally self-sufficient” actor. It appears that the dominant discourse and orthodoxy of the sector’s understanding and expectation of the role of program workers is to invite the man to recognise and acknowledge himself as such. The explanations and accounts of their behaviour that men give take place within the context of their power relations - which are reflected and reproduced through these interactions.

This discourse of total autonomy is learned within the sector through the social sciences and helping professions that represent the inculcation of the majority of workers. Facilitators’ interactions and interventions could be seen as both enabled and constrained by this discourse: it can mandate the interventions that they are prepared to provide, though alternatively it requires of them that they transpose the messy, unique and changing actualities of men’s lives into abstract forms and categories that could be made actionable as the discourse which is called domestic violence. It would be prudent to question whether the intervention of a MBCP continues to obfuscate the power of men by obscuring the extent to which their violent and abusive behaviours are embedded in the structure of patriarchal society298. Surely the complexities and inherent tensions within the process of

298 See, for example, Hearn, 1996.
change are not fully explored if the site of intervention is only focused on an individuals’ journey? It is across the broad range of both personal and individual motivations - and the socially structured boundaries of dominant social relation systems that are informed by patriarchal doctrine - that a man may or may not decide to steer a different path from violent and abusive behaviours. The radical implications of a feminist analysis of violence as a ‘normal’ feature of patriarchal society are profoundly blunted because men’s actions – the violence, the behaviour – are removed from the concrete social relational contexts of their lives: that is, the behaviour is individualised by not connecting the personal to the political.299 However, while the sector clings so tightly to individual responsibility without consideration of context or ‘room to move’, as a multi-layered process the preserving of hegemony reinforces the roles that these ideologies play in locating sites of struggle. The construction of a strong metaphorical hegemony, by necessity, involves the creation of an ideological closure.

The concepts of both choice and responsibility are, thus, requiring of due diligence, as these suppositions can support a liberal individualism through deconstructing the independent, holistic, self-willed individual as well as nurturing a dispensing of structural location. To my mind the behaviours of men are much greater than simply a juxtaposition of individual actions. Without the sector engaging more with a socio / culturally grounded discourse, violent and abusive behaviours are reduced to transactions that disregard the meaning to those involved, or minimised to the external frameworks that articulate that very gendered difference in the first instance.

299 See, for example, Greig, 2001.
As I discussed in chapter five, legitimating the discourses held by the sector presupposes both norms and values. There is an implicit or explicit statement that a particular course of action, a decision or a policy is acceptable practice within the given sector, state, legal or political system. The narratives of actors through this research suggest that workers engaged in text production (publicly) affirm and reproduce to a large extent the prevalent ‘correct’ position that is espoused through the peak body, NTV. Within this process there is the deliberate construction of a subjugated position that fits within the dominant subjectivity, the required stated pontification; that is, an extant political frame that certain interventions deserve support and authenticity, and others do not. As the peak body, NTV has the power and capacity to deliver or withhold acceptance, collegial embrace, peer credibility and, by degrees of separation and association, funding; and there is a strategic importance in key sector agents promoting their dominant discourse, selling their message; the ‘correct’ one. Workers are aware of this, and are also aware to a large degree that, strategically, there is a need to immobilise any opposition and to mobilise support for the required position. As I discussed in chapter five, while the doctrine of the guild establishes a concise and strict regime of what constitutes ‘truth’, it also culls and limits those with access to that privileged knowledge. While coercion and intimidation help to check resistance in any political systems, the key tactic must always be the evocation of interpretations that legitimise favoured courses of action and support the dominant discourse. Accordingly, other agents, or those external to the inner sanctum, are somewhat threatened by consequences to encourage them to comply or to remain quiescent. The allocation of any benefit must be infused with meaning: whose (political) well-being does a policy threaten, and whose does it enhance?
Many within the sector appear to have somewhat of an ambivalent relationship with the peak body NTV. While there is general agreement of the need for a peak body to lobby and represent the sector at various levels of external engagement, for many workers the peak body’s rigid, hard-line position is interpreted as restrictive and overbearing. Often the agency is perceived as kowtowing to the women’s sector – becoming “...one of the girls”, and is frequently regarded as having moved too far to the political left. The peak body’s position as surveillance overseer, instigating and controlling the dominant discourses of the sector can, in many ways, be interpreted as exhibiting the very same autocratic power and control structures that it purports to challenge. This paradoxical situation sees the dominant discourse appearing to promote egalitarian practice, but in essence can be more encouraging and reinforcing of those authoritarian power structures in so far as the ‘truth’ of the sector remains unquestioned. Workers appear to accept this, on some levels, but only to a point as resistance takes place at the micro-level where the final control rests with the managers and facilitators of the programs. After ticking the boxes in relation to implementing the required standards, workers are free to construct curricula according to their own frameworks of professional and political beliefs and values: and then “...just get on with it”.

Discourse analysis casts a critical lens upon the way in which these standpoints and relations are constantly open to change, depending on the power of the dominant paradigm. Symbolic capital legitimates actors to speak with the voice and position

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300 It has also been suggested that there is a flavour of ‘blame men’ that permeates the peak body and its auspiced delivery service, the Men’s Referral Service. Even colleagues who would describe themselves as robustly profeminist suggest that the peak body’s position gives men a bad name by concentrating on shaming and punishing all men rather than re-building a respectful, equitable, less damaging and sensitive masculinity. For an engagement with this issue see, for example, Morton (1997).

301 I mean no disrespect or snideness to Rorke (2009:18). This political embracing and alignment though is curious, and would not be concurred with by all across the sector.

302 As I mentioned previously, I am on the committee of overseeing compliance.
of status and authority as they have the symbolic power to represent to the collective other the undisputed “…official version of the social world” (Mahar, Harker & Wilkes, 1990:13). Sector training, for example, is predominantly delivered by the peak body\(^{303}\) which attempts to develop and authenticate and frame the politics and rhetoric of the dominant discourses\(^{304}\). The family violence sector is awash with power dynamics at many and varied levels of influence and intensity, and the social positions of workers - under the peak body’s gaze of scrutiny and accountability - are constructed through considerable processes of funding bodies, cultural influences, institutional practices and politics that are shaped by macro and micro relations of power. Within these many discourses, concrete identities in social relations are forged based on a multiplicity of ascribed social and political categories\(^{305}\). Through this agents claim authority over sites of multiple contestations that involve differing discourses and varying discursive positions along a political continuum (van Dijk, 1998); and competing discourses - and multiplicities of truth within that - struggle and compete for hegemony. The positioning and jockeying of agents through discourse does not suggest that standpoints are fixed or determined but rather that they are socially constructed; not only is the influence of hegemonic power recognised, but also the possibility of struggle – within the politic – of alternative definitions and standpoints.

Several participants through this research however suggested that they enjoyed being out on their own and were comfortable playing the role of ‘maverick’ who wasn’t afraid of suggesting controversial engagement and intervention: that is, a

\(^{303}\) And / or its accredited associates.

\(^{304}\) For an overview of specific training opportunities see NTV Notes, January, 2011:7.

\(^{305}\) NTV’s recent appointment of a dedicated Policy Coordinator means that the peak body has recognised the need to, and will be, clearly stating its position publically on men’s family violence and their understanding of MBCPs in that enmeshing, and contributing further to lobby and liaise with broader sector engagement. This clarity is useful as it brooks no argument with the organisation’s position. Agreement is another issue.
challenge to their perception of a conservative, authoritative status quo. This confronting of dominant positions focuses attention on the constitutive power of discourse and its relationship to material practices. Agents can use language in the pursuit of their own goals\textsuperscript{306} – while simultaneously acknowledging their embeddedness in discursive systems that are characterised through sector history and tradition, and their immersion within those very bureaucratic and political institutions. And workers choose – or don’t choose – to play the game; to toe the line; to breast the bar of compliance. Or otherwise.

**Integrating Discourses**

The challenging of men’s violence and abuse in the family is a very controversial field, alive with debate and disagreement as to the most appropriate means of engaging men and challenging their behaviours. Differing discourses from invested agents with differing discursive positions are frequently, passionately and persistently argued as each seeks to stake their claim on scarce funds, public support, and the moral high ground of truth, ‘correct practice’ and professional credibility. As Bograd (1992) commented, the intensity of diversity, innovation and competitiveness within the sector can almost appear to verge on the abusive as agents appear to replicate the very power and control dynamics that they purport to be in opposition to. This is, after all, a branch of the political tree – gender politics - and politics is founded upon taking a clear unambiguous ideologically-based position. Perhaps, though, this irony appears to have been missed.

It seems that many practitioners and activists are prepared to work with the inherent tensions involved in taking a both / and position in working with men who

\textsuperscript{306} For example, as I discussed in the critique of advertising material. Whether or not their position is credible / appropriate is another issue.
perpetrate violence and abuse in the family. Within the many varied discourses there are discrete implications and concepts that are taken and used by workers to position themselves in the wider debates. Many practitioners advocate holding simultaneously contradictory positions, but attempt to focus on how these positions can enrich each other while tolerating their opposition and contradiction. This is a position that is consistent with a scientific view that is accepting of the possibility that there may be a number of underlying causes to any occurrence. When men’s personal history is combined with situational factors and particular cultural norms, their violence towards their women partners may be more easily understood and, more importantly, engaged with through a greater range of interventionist framework options. As the desired outcome is safety, that sounds somewhat seductive. Practitioners consider ways in which men come to make decisions based on the collective effect and locations of available information that combines influences from the socio / cultural, the biological and the psychological; and given that these constraints may limit a man’s non-violent choices, there is a need to consider how constraints are overlapped. While acknowledging the inherent tensions from a feminist perspective in working within a therapeutic framework, both positions have their truths, and it would appear in this work that perhaps neither can stand alone. In the interests of espousing the aforementioned desired outcome – safety for women and children – it may perhaps be more useful to explore how understandings of gendered patterns of violence and control can be enriched by the insights of clinical practice, and particularly how therapeutic practices can be deepened by the broader location of political and social wisdom307.

307 This is an important point. I do not believe that you can work legitimately in therapy with men without drawing upon the man’s understanding and beliefs regarding how he locates, sees and understands himself in the world of masculinity: effectively, how he ‘does’ what it means to be a man, or how he ‘performs’ masculinity.
The axioms of the sector appear to be potentially shaken by the thought of external influences such as learnings from clinical practice. As previously mentioned, Day et al. (2009a) argued that MBCPs appear to be less effective in reducing recidivism than do programs for other offender groups, and while the model of systems response and intervention to men’s family violence has predominated at the inter-agency level, further consideration might be given to ways in which MBCPs are both designed and delivered. It appears that the program logic of MBCPs is rarely articulated (Pease, 2004) leading to possibilities of low levels of program integrity, and one way to improve program effectiveness would be to combine some of the approaches demonstrated in more general violence prevention programs, as well as what is known to be effective as useful interventions in general about offender / criminal rehabilitation. This does not sit well with the sector’s fixed insistence on a relatively narrow, politically-grounded feminist analysis framework of intervention, though I suggest that the complementarities appear somewhat obvious as both are dealing (frequently) with criminal behaviours, and the desire to change those behaviours. Again, perhaps this reluctance to embrace diversity has more to do with agents’ fear of stepping outside of the dominant discourse; and perhaps, to some extent, relinquishing ownership of that discourse?

The lack of a clearly spelt out model of change inevitably leads to confusion - amongst both clients and facilitators - concerning the ambitions of the intervention. As previously mentioned, counselling approaches appear to be somewhat incongruent with a program location that focuses on issues such as the impact of the man’s behaviour upon his partner, responsibility, and individual agency within the process of change. Giving more focus to issues of treatment integrity and theories of change would represent a level of sophistication that is not present in the original
Duluth model - more than likely as a consequence that the scrutiny from many agencies has centred around legal and system reform that is based on the assumption that more transparent statutory responses need to be anchored before interventions with men can be improved. Change-stage matched interventions\(^{308}\), and the general principle of matching interventions to recognised individual needs, is not well established in the family violence sector\(^{309}\). This would apply to not only matching interventions to the levels of a man’s motivation to change, but also to varying needs of individual men, and / or to levels of risk to their partners and others. It is prudent to consider that interventions which are matched to the identified needs of an individual perpetrator will be more effective in achieving the desired outcome than those which are not\(^{310}\), and it would seem highly probable that a man who has no other serious problems, other than his abusive and violent behaviour, is more likely to have quite a different set of intervention needs than does a man who has an antisocial personality disorder, limited verbal skills, is perhaps isolated through the absence of family support, or has severe substance dependence issues.

These reflections point to the potential usefulness of considering individualised assessment of each client’s needs, so that interventions can be matched to the particular requirements of the individual man. They do, however, presuppose an individual-level theory of perpetration that recognises that there is considerable heterogeneity that exists between men who use violence and abuse in the family\(^{311}\).

The dominant discourse of the family violence sector is grounded in structural theories which are generally underpinned by assumptions that the same processes

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\(^{308}\) McMaster (2006) has developed more sophisticated arguments around this issue.

\(^{309}\) Workers would suggest that, amongst other reasons, funding and time are not sufficiently resourced.

\(^{310}\) For a discussion concerning inconsistent evidence for this consideration, particularly in relation to interventions with substance abusers, see Klag, O’Callaghan, and Creed, (2005).

\(^{311}\) Again, I refer to one of the fundamental tenets of profeminism, that being to highlight the diversities amongst men.
sustain violence for all men and, as such, the same types of responses are likely to be helpful for all men who use these behaviours. This paradigm suggests that there is no reason to specifically tailor interventions to individual men and, indeed, the sector would propose that they highlight the dangers of assuming that some men who use violent behaviours are in some way less culpable than others. However, I suggest that the sector boxes itself into a corner with its rigid one-size-fits-all framework, and here I concur with Day et al. (2009a) who argued, as I previously mentioned, that strategies to incorporate both individual and structural approaches to interventions with men’s violence in the family are more than likely to be unsuccessful in so far as they embrace a ‘one template for all participants’ approach to program delivery. That is, that they embrace, as I have previously articulated, programs that are not responsive to the needs of individual men. These considerations do not sit well with the orthodoxy of the dominant discourses of feminist analyses of men’s violence in the family, and there is no regard or place to consider the diversities amongst men. This is regarded as not important, as all men are regarded as having the same motivations for their behaviours. I consider that potentially this restrictiveness does not do the identified ambition – safety – sufficient recognition and justice.

From the perspective of the idealised profeminist Duluth model that underpins the programs discussed in this research, giving any attention to any claimed external influences, psychopathology and / or differences that occur between men in programs is a distraction from the dominant location of men’s family violence as rooted in structural gender inequalities. While acknowledging the axioms upon which programs are based – that all male perpetrators have the same reasons for perpetrating, power and control, and that it is a choice, and that a psycho-educational
intervention is deemed the most appropriate – for those experiencing this behaviour. MBCPs appear to have been embraced by many to be the most appropriate intervention for men. This is despite research suggesting that most men fail to engage or fail to complete the program. Research has consistently recorded high attrition rates for men attending similar programs. Thus, if these programs are ‘effective’ as claimed, then it is only for a very small minority of men: which begs the question - who does this intervention really fail?

Through a poststructuralist lens the eclectic, holistically integrated position is somewhat problematic. Many of the implications and constructs that arise out of differing discourses are frequently incommensurable with those from other discourses (Pease, 2004). As O’Neill (1998) pointed out, this makes the construction of an integrated intervention program difficult, fragmentary and …contradictory. Because decisions must be made about how the problem is to be formulated and how and what interventions will take place, an integrated approach will most likely feature the use of some discourses more than others, and this choice will depend on the orientation, background and resources available to the interest group concerned (1998:34).

Those working with men who use violence and abuse in the family have continued to address and challenge the frameworks of engaging the indignant; however, to my mind it must be asked if we have ever been fully conscious or aware of our own discursive strategies. To paraphrase Margolin (1997:134), workers themselves in the sector become unwitting victims of the system, as systems of rules and obligations originates in the discourse, not in the worker nor in the client. Thus, while having laid the theoretical frameworks for this research, there is a degree of limitation on a strict poststructuralist analysis of men’s behaviour change group work intervention. Language is fraught with ambiguity and infinite meanings, and yet social life is

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312 See, for example, Stark, 2007 or Brodeur et al., 2008.
dependent upon speech and writing. There would appear to be a danger in assuming that appalling acts of humanity, including those under the watchful eye of MBCP facilitators, are beyond our knowledge and are merely in the relativising discourses of professionals?

In suggesting that the language of discourse has become much more central in a change process that involves practitioners, activists and policy workers, Healy (2004:40) claimed that the language practices through which family violence is understood, the silences about personal experiences, and campaigns for the public naming of violence have all been contested. Collective agents play a considerable role in this process of constructing, contesting and reproducing the dominant discourses to focus attention on limited constructions of a political issue. This reinforces and reflects the taken-for-granted portrayal of the demand for policy engagement or change, and correspondingly contributes to a pivotal intervention and influence in reinforcing and reproducing hegemonic power.

To be aware of artifice suggests that there is a reasonably solid foundation for identifying the authentic. There has been a danger for me in the genesis and gestation of this research in using the frameworks of a poststructural analysis to reduce good workers’ work – and intentions – to artifice. There needs to be a method for discerning artifice from authenticity; however, a poststructuralist analysis is so often limited by the lack of epistemological criteria to evaluate knowledge claims. Thus, it would seem perhaps that one of the central limitations of a sole poststructuralist lens amounts to the epistemic fallacy; that is, reducing what we know to how we know it. According to a poststructural analysis, discourse is reality and reality is discourse. If one follows this logic, then the lens of a
poststructuralist analysis is flawless. On the other hand, if there is more to knowledge than mere language events, then this may only be a starting point for researching the complex relationship between power, postulation and language in intervening with men who use violence and abuse in the family.

Tolman and Edelson (1995) argued that it may be the case that the greatest contribution men’s stopping violence programs make may not be their work with individual offenders, but rather their ability to bring together major agents in the criminal justice and community service sectors to work cooperatively to reduce men’s violence in the family. Cooperative efforts among criminal justice agencies, providers of MBCPs, victim advocates, women’s agencies, and the community are likely to produce more significant reductions in family violence than any single unit or program. Much of what is important in changing social attitudes toward men’s violence in the family lies in the coordinated and consistent messages that criminal justice agencies send through their interactions with women and men and in criminal justice agencies’ cooperative work with community groups, schools, and violence interventions313. Thus, changing the behaviour of individual men is only part of the larger policy objective of deterring everyone from being violent and abusive to their partners314.

One considerable barrier to evaluation has been that, to date, there has still been no common tool or capacity across the sector provided to monitor a program’s adherence. Developments in the sector, particularly in the area of criminal and court referral and involvement315, have seen the implementation of practices that now are

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313 A coordinated collaborative approach has become what would also be regarded as another of the axioms upon which these interventions are based.
314 Ideally, or anyone else!
315 For example, men’s programs being used as a diversion, as previously discussed.
not covered by the peak body’s minimum standards. This can potentially compromise safety. The signing of a statutory declaration of adherence is noble and well intentioned and, as interviewees reported, open to manipulation and scepticism. The sector has dragged its feet on this issue, quoting lack of funds available through DHS to achieve a desirable outcome of program adherence. While moves are currently underway to attempt to address this issue\textsuperscript{316}, it will not come soon enough as the lack of tools and process has been a glaring omission and a contradiction of the sectors’ stated transparency claims.

**Moving to the macro**

It would seem pertinent to enquire as to how MBCPs may be able to contribute to the broader process of social change. The blunt assessment of one interviewee that “...(t)hey don’t” contribute to broader social change is glaring. While Bowker (1998) suggested that a lack of progress in reducing men’s violence towards women tended to reflect more a lack of political will, Gondolf (2002) proposed that programs are sending a clear message that men need to take responsibility, and can and must change their behaviour towards women. I do not dispute that; though, stating the obvious, a pre-requisite for getting that message is coming in to contact with a MBCP in the first place. While all men have the capacity to influence the culture and environment that allows some men to choose to be perpetrators, and effective prevention demands of men that they look at their own potential for violence as well as take a position challenging the violence of other men, it remains problematic if and how a MBCP, working with individual men at an individual level on a structural problem, provides that contribution. This is a difficult area to address however, and I ponder whether the criticisms of MBCPs for not engaging with social change are

\textsuperscript{316} See NTV Notes, January, 2011.
unfair. Are programs being criticised for not doing what they are not designed to do, and what they don’t do except (i)n a very slow burning way.

It is useful to reflect upon the location of a MBCP within broader socio / cultural change activism and advocacy. In attempting to lay a foundation for an engagement with change parameters regarding men’s violence and abuse, Donovan, Francas, Peterson, & Zappelli (2000) identified that there are five potential message strategies for a change campaigns. First, criminal sanctions must be available with an unambiguous response that reinforces that violence is a crime. Second, the community needs to be involved at many and varied levels. This intervention may take the approach of encouraging friends and neighbours to report domestic violence or intervene with the victim or perpetrator. Third, there needs to be a clear statement of social disapproval at all levels of interaction. Fourth, it must be clearly stated that there are consequences for behaviour and that violence and abuse has a considerable impact upon partners, children and others. Fifth, and particularly relevant to MBCPs, that help is available, and must be seen to be available, for both the person experiencing the violence, and the perpetrator to address his violent behaviour (2000: 80).

I have previously referred to the White Ribbon Day campaign. This campaign, established in Canada in 1991 and since developed in the United States, Europe and Australia, was the first male-led activism against men’s violence in the world. Elements of WRD 2006 in Australia have received considerable criticism and condemnation from women’s emergency services and anti-violence peak bodies who have questioned how effective it is being in this country (Winter & Green, 300)
Media advertising\textsuperscript{317} was strongly criticised as being very confusing, appearing to feature gratuitous violence\textsuperscript{318}, and in no way attempting to engage men to consider their collective responsibility for men’s violence - whether committed by them or not. Critics were particularly galled by the lack of response to these complaints and condemnations, in particular complaints that not only did they fail to consult women sector workers and advocates, but that they also failed to do market research among men (Winter & Green, 2006). In response, the WRD campaign group – which included UNIFEM - chose the self-justification of engaging professional health workers to ‘expertly’ defend the advertising as well as prominently linking to explanations of the advertising. Not only did they miss the point, but they inadvertently presented an argument that was quite incongruent to the desired outcomes.

A feminist analysis of gender, which posits men’s violence and other inequalities between men and women as socially constructed and not biologically determined, creates a robust paradigm to start to address change in these behaviours. As a society, we need to recognise that violence of any sort is unacceptable irrespective of who is involved and where it occurs. In particular, however, structural imbalances that are sanctioned, reinforced and replicated through patriarchy and its insidious off-shoot, male privilege, need to be addressed by and within the socio / cultural space in which they occur. As one respondent from the International Violence Against Women Survey articulated “...I think that for any changes to really occur, they need to begin in society” (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004:115). It is perhaps pertinent

\textsuperscript{317} Media advertising was produced pro bono by Saatchi & Saatchi. They had the support and sponsorship of UNIFEM.

\textsuperscript{318} Men were depicted as being prepared to do anything to ensure their children’s well being and safety. However, doing ‘anything’ included violent acts of self-harm such as crawling over broken glass or, as in one brutal depiction, a man amputating his own arm.
to be reminded of Gondolf’s (2002) attention to the context in which intervention
takes place in that men’s behaviour change

programs are part of a broader intervention system. They depend on – or at least are related to – arrest practices, court procedures, probation supervision, women’s (domestic violence) services, and other community services. That is, they have a broad context (2002:2).

As a co-founder of Men Overcoming Violence reflected “…(a)n article of faith from the beginning was that men’s violence was learned. Abusive behaviour didn’t come with the plumbing. That’s what made it possible to even think about doing the work. If it was learned, it could be unlearned”\(^\text{319}\). Intervention strategies supported by a model of community accountability model require a dramatic shift in the day-to-day interactions between program leaders, advocates, and the men with whom they work. MBCPs have treated the problem of men’s violence against women as an individual circumstance that is addressed in the isolation of the programs. Society has in the past been willing to deny ownership of the epidemic of violence against women. Part of the place of (male) privilege is to deny its existence so that it doesn’t get challenged, and that the privilege can continue. Part of that denial takes the form of diverting violent men into MBCPs without attempting to examine and challenge the social context in which their violence takes place. Men need to be openly challenged - not only in the ‘classroom’ or the group setting, but also in the community - about the messages they receive about their dominance of women. Multiple models of manhood that do not equate masculinity with power and control over women would be a useful start. That acknowledgment could also take the form of holding all men accountable by challenging men who perpetrate behaviour as well as men who do not (Douglas et al., 2008). As Heise (1997:160) proposed, “…(t)he more I work on violence against women, the more convinced I become convinced that the real way forward is to redefine what it means to be male”.

\(^{319}\) Cited in Greig, 2001:5
I stated in the introduction that seeing partner-perpetrated abuse as a human rights issue requires a considerable paradigm shift in politics, theory, narrative and morals. Consensus appears to favour state intervention in conjugal relationships where there is violence, stalking or abuse of children. Definitions of ‘violence and abuse’ have recently been extended to include other behaviours such as emotional and financial abuse. However, by the time a man’s domination of his partner has reached this point the coercive control that he has inflicted has more than likely “…severely eroded (the) woman’s personhood from the inside out” (Stark, 2007:218). What may be missing from the bigger picture is acknowledgement of the harm caused by men’s broad-based controlling behaviours that is politically impacting enough to rally public reasons for their abolition. Men’s dominating and coercively controlling behaviours impact on women’s autonomy, and compromises their liberty. As a consequence, women are restricted in their ability to move freely about the world; and the ever-present fear of violence and domination steals from women their autonomous potential, confidence and esteem. This is an on-going attack on women’s dignity and freedom320. The abuse of women through rape, ‘domestic’ violence, being kept as chattels and property etcetera are causes of women’s subordination rather than simply a consequence of these behaviours. There is a considerably robust analogy between state-sanctioned and private forms of this abuse: a conception that overlaps broad concerns with social and economic justice, and reinforces and highlights linkages between state reforms concerning policy and law, and grass-roots community-level activism. Gendered violence is an important cause of inequality: women are denied both economic and social prerequisites for self-autonomy, independence and individuation. As Stark (2007:222) articulates

320 See, for example, Schechter (1982:318).
succinctly, “...constraint in personal life remains a major source of sexual inequality that affects (women’s) overall social progress”\textsuperscript{321}.

Respecting the limitations of CDA

I undertook this research with an awareness that discourse is not everything, as there is always a potential of overstating a case for any particular methodological or theoretical framework. To that point I have been conscious of the need to locate discourse analysis alongside existing paradigms of research, and to maintain a focus on persisting structural components that can potentially both constrain and enable specific intervention directions. If CDA aims to provide resources for cohorts that are subjected to dominant discourses in their daily lives, there is little evidence of those effects in the policy-making community, and even less about what practical resources it may have to offer. If there is an argument to increase the reflexivity of language usage, the responsibility appears to fall upon individual researchers – who ideally may also be activists – to translate academic discourse into language and resources that are useful for coalface practice and political struggle. It would be useful also to recognise that local coalface practice should not be simply deduced from sole analyses of meta-narratives and / or super-structural frameworks.

It is important to note that there are issues raised in regards to epistemological incompatibility in using CDA as it draws influences from considerably diverse bodies of social theories. This has been notable in this research which itself is dealing with tensions and incongruencies across political positioning and axioms of practice. While CDA embraces a social constructionist epistemology in regard to language and its use and meaning, it holds a structural account of social power as

\textsuperscript{321} See also Beasley & Thomas, 1994.
objectively possessed by differing cohorts and social classes. The differences and
the tensions need to be acknowledged, and to attempt to balance this it is useful to
move beyond an instrumental structurally located view of power as something that is
imposed down a hierarchy, and that is possessed by elites; as can be the dominant
understanding of power within CDA.

CDA’s historical and theoretical genesis struggles at times with the multiple
meaning invested in the concept of ideology. Ideology can and has been defined in
so many ways that there is a potential that CDA can be portrayed as little more than
a form of abstract ideological critique. However, CDA is a different form of analysis
as it endeavours to engage empirical data and knowledge to precisely and carefully
articulate how ideologies are constructed in the first place in discourse at the stratum
of material practice.

To maintain a critical focus on theoretical and empirical factors of domination and
resistance does not leave space to include social practices outside this binary, and
the researcher would be well served to give due recognition to differing social
practices. Many individual experiences cannot be translated by the dominance of the
interviewer and the resistance of the interviewee. The researcher may also use the
interview process – where roles are played out - to translate a political agenda or to
satisfy a perceived emotional requirement: or to stake their own claim for
legitimacy. Additionally, it is important to my mind that the researcher has the
foresight to be reflective as to the manner in which their own language - that
emanates in academia and the symbolic capital of theory and truth - articulates
individual perspectives particularly given the authenticity, status and legitimation
that is accorded to convergences within the academy.
I am acutely aware that within this research I have only looked at small pieces of a bigger picture. Thus, this leaves me open to accusations of partiality and bias in my own selection of material, if not the actual analysis of it. As previously mentioned, I had initial reflections around conducting focus groups to capture dialogue between workers, but gathering together a group of already overworked colleagues for data collection at my indulgence was beyond the scope of this research. Additionally, workers could not have been guaranteed the anonymity they sought. CDA is only able to highlight a small voice about language, space and time. While it can generalise around questions of theoretical engagement and social processes, it is more taciturn about the effects of orders of discourse across related fields.

Conclusion

This research has presented a critical discourse analysis of the frameworks of behaviour change groupwork intervention as a response to the behaviour of men who perpetrate violence and abuse within the family. Conflicting intervention strategies and findings have been critiqued, and I highlighted that facilitators and sector workers are pitted against considerable ambiguities and points of contention, and are both aligned and segregated through differing vocabularies and articulatory practices. In this research I considered the foundational axioms, nomenclature and rhetorical positioning put forward by advocates of this method of intervention. Included in this were theoretical understandings of the context of men’s violence and abuse within the family, claimed ambitions of intervention, the state’s input into regulation of the sector, and the ongoing debate concerning the evaluation and effectiveness of this response to men's behaviour.
I grounded the theoretical understandings within a poststructuralist feminist framework to analyse the various ways in which agents attempt to establish jurisdiction over their expression of authenticity within the sector. These included a claim to operate within a feminist analysis, a professional claim to scientific knowledge and expertise, and the development of standards for professional practice. The arguments within this research, as I have previously mentioned, are not solely based on interview data alone. I augmented the theoretical analysis by drawing upon empirical data gathered from one-to-one semi-structured interviews with key sector players such as program managers and facilitators of MBCPs.

Tensions and contradictions have surfaced in the genesis and development of this research, and this leads me to desire greater salience of the need to consider a broader lens of critique on the interweaving of the gender identity of men, the learning of violent and abusive behaviours, and the means by which workers engage with the interventions described within this research. Throughout this research I have often referred to Jenkins (1994:19) succinct summation that “...(w)ork with violence and abuse has been especially redolent with issues of ownership, jockeying for power, and competitive debates as to who has the cornerstone on truth and correct practice. Protagonists gather in camps...not unlike political parties, and argue for truth”. In this environment there is an attempt to justify positions of self righteousness to speak with authority; to mark out territory; and to stake a claim. Workers assess these positions, and come to a conclusion as to how they can respond, and then go about their business of providing the intervention that they believe is acceptable; or at the least that provides some degree of the outcome that they require. If not, there is the demand of attempting to work with / in a system that hampers and / or challenges their political foundations and ethical paradigms. The
burden of responsibility for this engagement is in the court of these workers who, however, also have a profoundly conflicting vested interest in selling the authenticity of the intervention.
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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe this work in general, and your program in particular?

2. What for you – and your agency – is the focus of this work?

3. What theoretical frameworks underpin this program?

4. Where / how do you situate the politics of this work?

5. Given that programs espouse a profeminist framework, how does a feminist analysis of men’s violence impact on your program? How is this articulated within the program?

6. How are reflections on men, masculinities and behaviour communicated through the program?

7. Through engaging with this program where would men come to locate the causes of their violence and abuse?

8. In what way are men invited to understand their behaviour as their individual choice?

9. What role does anger management play in this work?

10. How do you engage with issues of social class in working with men?

11. To what extent is this intervention therapeutic?

12. Do these programs work? Can it be demonstrated that they do work? What is regarded as effective intervention?

13. To what extent or not is a counselling / therapeutic response to men who use violence in the family – an individual intervention - congruent with a feminist analysis of men’s violence as structurally located?

14. How are the joint issues of accountability and transparency addressed: and transparently addressed?

15. How do the NTV standards impact on your work?

16. In what way do these programs address change at the broader structural level of patriarchy and privilege?

17. The revised standards require monitoring through a survey of compliance and a Statutory Declaration signed by the CEO or equivalent. Is this sufficient accountability given the potential vagaries of self-reporting and the corresponding outcomes that hinge on ‘toeing the line”? What would be a different response? Are reporting levels sufficient?
Appendix 2

Interview participant information

Eleven participants were simply contacted directly – either by telephone, email or face to face - an outline and summary of the research was offered for their information, and they were asked if they would like to be involved and were prepared to be interviewed. Ten accepted, one declined. They were guaranteed confidentiality through anonymity. All bar two were known to me, and I had been professionally employed as a group facilitator by two program managers. Participants numbered N=10, and 7 were male, 3 female. There was no consideration of gender of potential participants, nor was there purposive sampling of colleagues.

All participants were facilitators of programs, and all managers were also facilitators. The perspective that I took was that it was more important to have someone very familiar and used to the work to speak on behalf of the program. Most interviews were approximately an hour in duration and, with 4 exceptions - which took place in private homes (2), over the telephone (1), and a local cafe (1) – all were conducted at the participant’s workplace. All interviews were conducted individually; that is there were no joint interviews with participants from the same agency. In total 7 agencies were represented.

In this simple coding system the first letter, M/F, refers to male / female, and the second letter refers to the participant’s role as either a manager or a facilitator of a MBCP.

MF1 GRT Program facilitator, 50s, 10 yrs experience, social work background.
MM2 RLR Program manager, 50s, 12 yrs experience, psychology background.
MM3 CPA Program manager, 50s, 14 yrs experience, psychology background.
MF4 HSA Program facilitator, 30s, 5yrs experience, psychology background.
MM5 NHD Program manager, 40s, 8 yrs experience, counselling background.
MM6 GWC Program manager, 60s, 14 yrs experience, psychology background.
MF7 WWM Program facilitator, 50s, 4 yrs experience, groupwork background.
FM1 MLD Program manager, 60s, 11 yrs experience, counselling background.
FF2 SRQ Program facilitator, 40s, 5 yrs experience, social work background.
FF3 CBA Program facilitator, 40s, 6 yrs experience, psychology background.
Faculty of the Constructed Environment
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE

19 May 2003

Pete French
128 Florence Street
MENTONE Vic 3194

Dear Pete

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING PARTICIPANTS
ETHICS APPLICATION REF No. 154

The Human Research Ethics sub-committee in the Faculty of the Constructed Environment met on 10 May 2003 and considered your application for ethics approval for your research project entitled "Staking a Claim: A critical discourse analysis of behaviour change groupwork intervention with men who perpetrate violence and abuse in the family."

I am pleased to advise that the sub-committee recommended the approval of your ethics application for your Doctor of Philosophy program as Risk Level 1.

Should there be any further significant change in your research project, which may have ethical implications, please contact the Chair of the Faculty Research Committee, Associate Professor Tony Dalton.

Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on 9925-3956.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Penelope Barrett-Young
Executive Secretary, Research Committee
Faculty of the Constructed Environment

CC: AProf Bob Pease
School of Social Science and Planning
UBEC-FE